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THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY



BY

RODRIGUES OTTOLENGUI

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS, NEW YORK & LONDON

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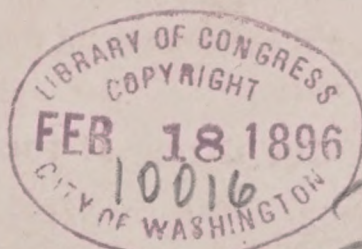
THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY

BY

RODRIGUES OTTOLENGUI

AUTHOR OF "AN ARTIST IN CRIME," "A CONFLICT OF EVIDENCE," ETC.

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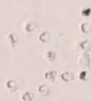
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The Knickerbocker Press, New Rochelle, N. Y.

A LETTER.

My Dear Walter :

Let me ask you to turn back the pages of memory, until you reach that one upon which is inscribed the record of our first night in camp, on the banks of Massabesic. You remember that we named the beautiful spot "Idalia," and you will recall the wondrous aurora which so brilliantly illuminated the broad expanse of the heavens, which covered us as we rocked gently in our boat, waiting vainly for the nibble which never came. What a night that was ! We did not catch anything ; not even a cold, thanks to our warm cardigans. But we gazed upon the gaudy panorama in the skies and felt the littleness of self, as man ever must when viewing the marvels of Nature.

But the Northern lights dimmed and died away at last, and we talked of lesser things, finally reaching that ever absorbing topic, our own work. In time we discussed certain stories which I had already published, and I remember how severely you criticised what you called my—"stupid soaring into the realms of the impossible,"

—when in your opinion you thought that I ought rather to confine myself to—“the probabilities of everyday life.”

How often during that holiday did you use the phrase “in all human probability,” till at last we all made jest of your habit, when finally you silenced me by saying: “At any rate your stories are not within human probability!”

Well, my friend, I have often thought over your words, even though I have not yet been convinced that the most interesting phases of human life are those which are of most common occurrence. After all, the main object of fiction is to entertain, and even though a little instructive lesson may be deftly interwoven with the plot, I fear that the modern novel is sometimes too highly spiced with philosophic dissertations. And in seeking to entertain is it not best to offer something out of the common? Something a little different from the dull routine of daily experience?

I send you herewith a copy of my new story. With what zest you will rush through its pages seeking for incidents which may not be—“within human probability!” But I warn you, that in these pages there are hidden many traps for you. The plot is purely fiction, but every character has a prototype in life. Those incidents which you will be most eager to call “impossible” have all happened.

You may doubt whether a foundling may become an heiress to \$5,000,000, and may also develop into a

society lady ; but the original of this character was a *débutante* last season, and the main facts are true.

You may doubt the possibility of "The Burglar's Social Union" ; but the floating gambling saloon flourished in our harbor very recently, and I visited it in company with a man who is practically at the head of the criminal fraternity of the metropolis. This man is a college graduate, has never been arrested, and he dominates a great band of "crooks," so that however implicated he may be in their crimes, they never "peach," but when convicted serve their sentences, without betraying this master-hand. On that boat I met at least fifty men whom Society would like to see in Sing Sing.

But I do not intend to point out all the pitfalls for you. Go ahead with your search for "impossibilities", and when you have found them all, send your list to me, and I will gleefully tell you, for your bewilderment, which have been borrowed from life.

Another word. I know that you dislike "dialect," and I agree with you in the main. Nevertheless "dialect" is sometimes essential. It should never be the object of the story-teller to show his acquaintance with people who distort English, but when an author reaches a locality where all love of grammar is dead, it would be absurd for him to put rounded periods in the mouths of his characters. Therefore, excuse the language of my "slum people." Just one thing more. You may write to me that "slum people" do not speak even as well as

I make them, but your views are taken from the Bowery tough of Stage-land, and believe me, that in a hundred visits to the poverty districts I have never met that exaggerated individual.

Very sincerely yours,

RODRIGUES OTTOLENGUI.

December 26, 1895.

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THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY

THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS CASE.

“ I AM delighted to see you,” exclaimed Mr. Mitchel, entering his library, and advancing to meet his visitor, with hand outstretched in cordial greeting.

“ Here I have been over to the other side, and, in London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, in fact everywhere, I find that our fame has preceded us. As soon as a man learned that my name is Leroy Mitchel, he would ply me with questions about the great New York detective, Mr. Barnes. And now, within twenty-four hours after leaving shipboard, here you are in *propria persona*, to answer for yourself. Well, tell me, what is the latest, the newest, the most mysterious case which may be troubling your waking hours, and disturbing your slumbers with nightmares of escaping criminals, and crimes undiscovered? There is some great case on hand I am sure, or you would not look me up so quickly. But of course, you have solved it, eh? You do not need any hints from

me?" Here he nudged Mr. Barnes playfully, while a sly twinkle enlivened his eye.

"No! I cannot say that I have solved it yet," replied Mr. Barnes, releasing his hand from Mr. Mitchel's hearty grasp, and resuming his seat. "In fact, if I had done so, I suppose I should not be here."

"Just so!" said Mr. Mitchel with a dry laugh.

"I saw your name in the published list of arrivals by the *Paris*," continued Mr. Barnes, "and as I knew that the case with which I am occupied would interest you, I thought I would look in and talk it over with you."

"And incidentally get my assistance, eh?"

"Nothing would please me better than to have your co-operation," said Mr. Barnes eagerly. "May I count upon it?"

"That must depend upon the nature of your case. What is it? A common police-court affair, which has baffled the uniformed force, because the criminal, by chance or design, has managed to enshroud the facts with a thin veil of mystery? Or have you really run across a classic crime?"

"It will prove to be the crime of the century," said the detective with a touch of enthusiasm in his voice.

"The crime of the century!" repeated Mr. Mitchel musingly. "You speak without fully weighing your words, Mr. Barnes. A common fault. Every word in the language has a definite meaning, and no two words, unless they be names for the same thing, express the

same shade of thought. If this be true of a single word, how much more so must it be, when we unite several into a phrase? This one, 'the crime of the century,' means more than you have perhaps intended to convey. The crime of the century has not been committed by one man. It is too stupendous. It is the problem to which I, myself, have given much study, without having as yet reached any ultimate conclusions. No, Mr. Barnes! Your case is not the crime of the century. Mine is. Some day I will tell you about it. When I have traced it to the end, you know. But now about your case?"

"Mr. Mitchel," said Mr. Barnes, "I do not know what crime it is, to which you have given so much attention, and which you choose to consider so great, but if it be more startling, more mysterious, or more difficult to unravel, than the one upon which I am engaged, then I shall look forward with keen expectancy to the time when you can give me the history of it."

"I may perhaps talk it over with you some day; I may even avail myself of your assistance. But tell me of your affair. It may have a connection with mine, after all. I should not be at all surprised."

"It is possible. Crimes are not uncommonly interdependent."

"Ah! You have discovered that, have you?"

Mr. Mitchel said this so quickly, that Mr. Barnes was puzzled. He gazed at Mr. Mitchel intently for a mo-

ment, and then replied, without having fully comprehended his companion's meaning.

"Why, yes," said he. "It is certainly a fact that one crime may lead to another. But what point do you make of that?"

"An important one," said Mr. Mitchel, with a wave of his hand towards his guest. "I find that I am in the presence of a detective with brains enough to look beyond the immediate case in hand. For surely, if you have found by experience that crime breeds crime,—pardon the harsh phrase, which however, exactly expresses the truth,—it follows that you cannot hope to fully comprehend a specified case, until you have searched back into the past, to learn whether it be merely a result of previous wrongdoing, or an initial departure from rectitude. You agree with me?"

"Oh, I suppose so, theoretically at least; though you are carrying me deeper than a practical detective would go."

"Oh, very well, we will go no deeper." Mr. Mitchel dismissed the line of thought with that incisive manner so peculiar to himself. "I did not know how far you would care to go; we will return to the shallow waters of regular detective work, by all means. Pardon the digression, and proceed with your narrative."

Mr. Barnes felt slightly annoyed. He realized that Mr. Mitchel was depreciating his talents, placing him on the plane of the common thief-taker, a plane which

he knew that Mr. Mitchel considered a very low one intellectually. Nevertheless he did not, even now, know wherein he had offended. Was it not true, that the practical detective should confine himself to the immediate facts connected with the crime in hand, if he hoped to bring the wrongdoer to justice, rather than to make speculative pilgrimages into the remote past? He still believed so, yet it annoyed him to find that he was evidently at variance with Mr. Mitchel on this point, for though he thought that gentleman egotistical in the highest degree, nevertheless he fully appreciated his intellectual capabilities. He would now have preferred to discuss the question, but it was not easy to reopen the subject, Mr. Mitchel having dismissed the topic. This made him irritable, as he often was when in Mr. Mitchel's society, despite the uniform courtesy with which he was always treated. Mr. Barnes therefore found himself obliged to confine himself to the relation of his case.

"Well then," began the detective, after a pause, "about a week ago, a most startling murder aroused the interest of the community. The victim was no less a man than Matthew Mora, a many times millionaire, prominent in Wall Street banking circles, as well as in Fifth Avenue drawing-rooms, and conspicuous for his many deeds of philanthropy."

"How was the killing effected?"

"In a most brutally horrible manner. The old man was clubbed to death. This is not speculation, but fact."

The murderer did not deign to hide the weapon, but left it upon the floor near the body. This was shrewd, because, had he taken it away from the house, its discovery might have been a clue which would have led us to a solution. But as it appears that the bludgeon was one of a collection of Indian implements of war, owned by Mr. Mora, its presence in the bedroom tells us nothing."

"Oh, yes, it tells you something," interjected Mr. Mitchel. "Every known fact connected with a crime, tells its quota of the truth, and is therefore more important than the theoretical or circumstantial evidence, which may be gathered."

"Of course I know that," said the detective testily. "What I mean is, that the weapon left in the room, having belonged to the dead man, gives us no direct clue to the identity of the murderer. It does, however, tell us something, and it may even, however indirectly, point to the right man. For example, it is positive that the murderer did not bring this club with him. From this postulate there are two possible deductions. First, the man may not have intended murder when he entered the house. Second, he may not have entered the house at all."

"Ah! Now you are doing better, Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Mitchel with a pleasant smile. "You mean that the criminal may have been an inmate of the house, and therefore did not need to look for a weapon, being familiar with those at hand, eh?"

“Exactly! And this is the more plausible of the two theories, because the Indian weapons were kept locked in a case in the library, on the floor below Mr. Mora’s bedchamber.”

“This case was not broken open, I suppose?”

“No. But as the key was commonly in the lock, this counts for nothing. The condition of the cabinet, however, together with the weapon used, furnishes us with another safe deduction. As you know, it is often difficult to decide whether a crime be premeditated or not. In this instance it was certainly planned.”

“This is interesting. How do you prove it?”

“The cabinet, as I have said, is usually locked, though the key is left sticking. On the morning after the murder, the door was found open. Thus it is evident that the master of the house had not himself taken the club to his room; for, being a man of exceedingly orderly habits, he would have locked the door. No, the murderer, knowing that a weapon of this kind was to be had, took it from the cabinet, but in his excited or abstracted frame of mind, he might naturally have left the door open.”

“You said awhile ago, Mr. Barnes, that the more plausible theory is, that the criminal was an inmate of the house. This may be, but do not overlook the possibility that, coming from outside, and planning against detection, the murderer may have chosen this weapon for the very reason that it would divert the attention of a detective, away from himself, and towards some other

man. He would need of course to have knowledge of the existence of the Indian weapons, and of the fact that they were within easy reach."

"He would also have needed the opportunity of entering the house, and of escaping unobserved. Now, in the first place, the only way of getting into the house is through the front door, a large storage warehouse occupying all of the street at the back; and secondly, Mr. Mora had a special night-watchman patrolling the front of his premises."

"And this night-watchman saw no one go in, or come out of the house?"

"On the contrary he saw a man do both. This man entered through the front door, using a latch-key, some time between one and two o'clock. He came out again about an hour later. But the watchman recognized him both times. It was Matthew Mora, Jr."

"The son?"

"The only son!"

"And heir, I suppose?"

"And heir. The only child. Mother dead."

"That is suspicious!"

"Very!"

"Anything else against the young man?"

"He returned to the house at five o'clock in the morning, differently dressed, and——"

"Differently dressed, you say?"

"Yes. Of this the watchman is positive."

"That ought to be significant?"

"I should say so. He went in, but within a few minutes he emerged again in great excitement. Passing the watchman he exclaimed: 'My father has been murdered! Let no one enter the house until I return!'"

"And then?"

"Then he went directly to the police station, and reported the case."

"A clever young man!"

"You will continue to hold that view, the more you hear. Two policemen were detailed to return to the house with him, and the central office was notified, so that within an hour experienced detectives were on the spot. One of these, my friend Mr. Burrows, was kind enough to stop for me, and ask me to accompany him. So that I was present at the first official investigation."

"You were fortunate."

"Yes! I always dislike to take up a case after others have moved things about, and tramped over the scene of the tragedy. We found the room in great disorder. Furniture overturned; the rugs about the room in tangled heaps, where the struggling men must have kicked them about; bric-a-brac strewn on the floor and broken; in fact, every evidence to prove that the old man had yielded up his life only after a desperate encounter with his assailant."

"Was he a powerful man? You said he was old?"

"Old is a figure of speech. He was something over

fifty, but he had been an athlete in his youth, and could give a good account of himself in a boxing-bout at any time. If his son was the murderer, the men were evenly matched. He is not so heavy as his father was, but he is sinewy, and has muscles of steel. I found Mr. Mora's watch under the bed, where it must have been knocked from the dressing-table. The fall had caused it to stop, and the hands indicated seven minutes of two, agreeing with the time during which the watchman testifies that young Mora was at home."

"Yes," said Mr. Mitchel, "but do not go too fast. The watch may have run down. It is uncommon for a good watch to stop, merely because it falls to the floor."

"Both of your points are good, in theory," replied the detective. "But neither applies in this instance. If a watch runs down, it cannot be started again without winding. By merely shaking this one I set it going, and to make assurance doubly sure, I let it run for an hour, when it was still keeping time. Next, though it be true that most watches would not be so easily stopped, this one, for some reason, is very sensitive to a blow. I tried the experiment of pushing it from the table to the floor, and at every attempt I found that it would cease its movement."

"You certainly have been thorough on this point," admitted Mr. Mitchel, "and I presume we may consider it established that the first attack upon Mr. Mora occurred at or near two o'clock."

"During the hour when the watchman claims that young Mora was at home," added Mr. Barnes.

"The watchman's testimony must be remembered, certainly," said Mr. Mitchel.

"Of course," continued the detective, "the first theory in these cases is naturally that of the midnight marauder, in search of plunder. But a careful examination showed that nothing had been abstracted, though various articles of furniture, and especially Mr. Mora's writing-desk, had been ransacked. I ought to mention that an open package containing several thousand dollars in notes, was conspicuously in view in a small drawer, and was untouched."

"Untouched? Is not that merely a presumption? Why may not this shrewd criminal have taken half, or two thirds, of the cash found, leaving the rest, as he did the club, to baffle detectives?"

"I have said that Mr. Mora was most methodical. We found a note-book in which was entered, from time to time, a detailed account of his worldly possessions. This included a statement of the cash balances in various banks, and the cash on hand. Under a date two days previous to the murder, is an entry, giving the balance of cash on hand, which is only about a hundred dollars more than the amount of the notes found in his desk."

"Well then, if not money, what did the murderer seek, in the desk which you say was ransacked?"

"Why not the will?"

"Ah! Of course, the will. Do you know that there was a will?"

"His lawyers declare that they made one for him recently; within a month, in fact. He bequeathed one half of his fortune to his son, and the other half was distributed among various charitable institutions."

"What was the total?"

"It is estimated that the fortune amounts to eighteen millions."

"One half of which is nine millions," mused Mr. Mitchel. "Enough, quite enough to be considered an incentive for murder. A legal incentive, I mean."

"Yes. The will cannot be found, and if not found, Charity loses, and young Mora gains, nine millions. Now we come to another point. We, that is I, found blood-stains upon the young man's clothing."

"Did I not understand you to say that he came back to the house in different clothing?"

"That could only apply to his outer garments, for of course the watchman could not observe whether he had changed his underwear. The blood-stains were on the wristband of his shirt, and on the sleeve of the right arm."

"Did you call his attention to this?"

"I did. For an instant he seemed disconcerted, but quickly recovered himself. Then he claimed the stains got on his shirt when he examined his father's body, and was feeling his breast to see whether life was extinct."

"He is a clever young man, Mr. Barnes."

"You said so before, and I told you that you would not alter your opinion. But I next asked him to explain how it happened that blood was upon the wristband, while none showed upon his cuffs?"

"Of course. A good point. He might have changed his cuffs, when he changed his other clothing. That was your idea was it not? How did he answer?"

"He said he had been away from home all night—"

"Away from home all night?"

"So he claimed. And that returning about five in the morning, he had first thought of retiring, and had thrown off his coat and removed his cuffs, when, a light burning in his father's room attracted his attention thither, as it was the old man's habit to sleep in darkness. Thus he had no cuffs on, when he examined the body, but put them on again before going out to the police station."

"He is shrewd, Mr. Barnes, very shrewd. This is a point of which I have often thought. The prosecution says, 'Prisoner, there is blood upon your garments!' Prisoner foolishly replies, 'That is not blood, but rust, or if blood, it is chicken blood!' Then the expert stalks in and testifies, 'It is blood! human blood!' But this young man disarms the prosecution at the outset. He says, 'Yes, it is blood! The blood of my father!' Then he explains plausibly how it happens to be upon him."

"Ah! yes, very good, Mr. Mitchel. But if he were really innocent, why should he wash, or attempt to wash the stain off, and why should he stop to replace his cuffs, if he were really in a hurry to report to the police?"

"So! He had attempted to wash away the blood. That was an error, I fear. But they all make mistakes. How did he answer these questions, that is if you asked them."

"Yes, I asked them, and he replied." Mr. Barnes spoke rather reluctantly. "He said that he had noticed the blood upon his wristband, and washed it off because he thought some fool of a detective might conceive the idea that he had killed his father. That he had put on his cuffs, because he was in too great a hurry to stop to change the shirt, and he had hoped that the cuff would hide the fact that the wristband had been washed."

"By heavens, Mr. Barnes, a brilliant answer. A very brilliant answer." Mr. Mitchel laughed heartily.

"It may be brilliant," retorted Mr. Barnes, "but it is false. And I will prove it so, if it be so."

"If it be so! Ah! Wisely added, Mr. Barnes. If it be so!"

"You, of course, agree that the crucial point in this affair is the conflicting statements of the watchman, and young Mora. The watchman asserts positively, that he saw the son enter the house and leave it again. He has been in the employ of the deceased for several years,

and was acquainted therefore with his son. Yet the young man stoutly denies that he was at home before five o'clock in the morning. Evidently one of these men is lying."

"Pardon me, Mr. Barnes; but you say that one of the men lies, because you think that young Mora is telling a falsehood. You do not mean that by any possibility the watchman is lying. Yet it may be that Mora tells the truth, and also that the watchman believes that his own statement is accurate."

"You mean that the watchman was perhaps mistaken, and that it was some other person who entered the house?"

"Precisely so. It is possible."

"Possible, yes. But far from probable. It seems that Mora has been wearing a peculiar brown plaid suit of late. The material he procured in Scotland, and it is not likely that another bit of cloth like it could be found in this city. The watchman was familiar with this suit of clothing, and swears that the man who entered the house that night wore that suit of Scotch plaid. Yet, in the face of this positive assertion, young Mora denies that he wore that suit at all that night, and suggests that the murderer, after committing the crime, may have dressed himself in this suit, wearing it over his own clothing. He claims that the watchman may have been mistaken about what was worn by the man going in, though he seems to have been quite accurate about what

was worn by him who came out, for, oddly enough, the plaid suit is missing."

"And young Mora says that the murderer may have taken it. Well, it is a very believable proposition."

"Believable," returned Mr. Barnes, hotly. "Yes, that is the worst of it. They have believed it. The coroner's jury, I mean."

"Ah, matters have proceeded as far as that, have they?"

"Yes! The full account of yesterday's proceedings is in the morning paper. You may read it."

"No," said Mr. Mitchel. "I would rather have you read it to me."

Mr. Barnes turned, so that the light from the window fell across his paper, and read the following:

"THE MORA MYSTERY.

"THE INQUEST BRINGS NO SOLUTION.

"THE SON ACQUITTED.

"The inquest in the Mora case ended yesterday, the jury bringing in the usual commonplace verdict, 'Died from wounds inflicted by parties unknown.' Thus, despite the many hints that the District Attorney and the detectives had discovered damaging evidence against young Matthew Mora, nothing has been proven. The evidence offered was entirely speculative and theoretical, and the jury rightly declined to cast a stain upon the young man's character, upon such flimsy testimony.

The main points upon which the police relied, were the discovery of blood upon the young man's sleeve, and the positive assertion of the watchman that he had been seen dressed in a plaid suit, known to be his, entering and leaving the house at or near one o'clock. The first point Mr. Mora easily disposed of, by openly admitting that the blood was that of his father, and that he had been smeared with it while examining the corpse, to ascertain whether the heart might not be beating. He denied the alleged visit to the house, as claimed by the watchman, and candidly confessed that he did not know what had become of the missing suit of clothing. He suggested, however, that the murderer may have worn it over his own blood-stained garments, when leaving the house, a theory that was evidently acceptable to the jury. This might not have been, had not Mr. Mora satisfactorily accounted for his time during the night. It seems that he has been taking an interest lately in the East Side slums, and has been studying the labor problem. On the night of the murder he attended a ball at Apollo Hall, hoping by associating with the inhabitants of the section, to gain a closer insight into their needs, and thus, perhaps, later on to apply the money which he knew would be his, and which has now come to him so unexpectedly, towards alleviating the distress of the poor slum dwellers. In support of this story he produced two witnesses, who testified that he was at Apollo Hall throughout the ball, dancing with some of the fair

Jewish maidens, and making merry with the men. They declare that he did not leave for home until about four o'clock, which tallies nicely with the time of his actual arrival there."

"Too nicely," growled the detective. "I need not read further. The reporter seems to be making an effort to whitewash young Mora, for the rest of the article is devoted to sounding his praises. You may look it over later if you like."

"Thank you. I will," said Mr. Mitchel, taking the paper. "Now then, what can I do for you in this case? What course will you pursue?"

"Well, the police put forward the theory that Mora is the murderer. The Coroner's Jury has virtually knocked their theory into a cocked hat. I have noted that in cases of this sort the police make little further effort, and by degrees the details are forgotten by the public, who seize upon the next crime served up to satisfy their appetite for the sensational. Thus the murderer escapes. But in this instance he shall not escape. If it be young Mora, I will bring the crime home to him, in return for his insolent language to me. If it be some other person, why I shall be equally well serving the ends of justice by discovering the truth."

"Yes, but beware, Mr. Barnes! For the first time since I have had the honor of your acquaintance you allow personal feeling to enter into your investigation of a case. Young Mora has been insolent to you, but that

would not justify you in weaving a web of circumstantial evidence around him, which will blast his reputation forever, even if it do not bring him to the gallows."

"I hope I am above that sort of thing," said Mr. Barnes, flushing deeply. "I am sure——"

"So am I. Sure that you are above it. You will do your best to discover the truth. Only, a personal spite is a dangerous element in such investigations. I merely call your attention to the existence of the viper, that you may crush it with your heel. But you ask me to aid you in this affair. It may surprise you to hear me say that I cannot go into the case as you desire."

"I am more than surprised, I am sorely disappointed," said the detective.

"Oh, it is not so bad as that," added Mr. Mitchel, quickly. "I may be of some use to you. You see the truth is, Mr. Barnes, I am not exactly a detective by trade. I mean no offense, but I cannot look at these cases from your standpoint. With you, a crime committed, indicates that there is a criminal at large. That criminal must be discovered, imprisoned, perhaps hanged. That is your work. It is a work with which I can have no sort of sympathy."

"But I have thought that these investigations interested you."

Mr. Barnes was much astonished at Mr. Mitchel's words.

"Ah ! Indeed, the investigation of a mystery is inter-

esting to me. Especially where the use of brains, and more particularly of brains against brains, enters into the work. But the study of a murder case, with the single object of hanging the murderer, is not attractive to me."

"Surely, you do not mean that murderers should go unpunished?"

"No, perhaps that would not be a wise course. But to me it seems that the arrest, conviction, and hanging of a specified murderer, is a matter of absolutely no importance; and of no effect in abating the tendency towards crime, which is such a conspicuous characteristic of mankind. As I hinted awhile ago, when you said that I went too deep for you, I can almost believe that it is of more utility to study the causes which have made a given crime possible, than to capture and kill the criminal. We think that we have thus gotten rid of him. We have put him away; out of the world. We have ended his career. Ah! But have we? Can we be sure that his crime will not breed another crime, as a direct sequence to the one for which he is punished? And do we know whether his punishment will advance or check the tendency towards crime which he has left as a heritage to his offspring? These are questions of more interest to me, Mr. Barnes, than the killing of the man who killed Mr. Mora."

"But surely, I must repeat," said Mr. Barnes, "you would not advise that crimes should go unpunished?"

"Perhaps I might, when I am wiser you know." Mr. Mitchel laughed, and once again abruptly changed the subject. "However, Mr. Barnes, since you frown so upon me, I will lend you my assistance."

"You will?" exclaimed Mr. Barnes, eagerly.

"I will, 'and there's my hand on 't,' as the song says. No! No! No thanks are necessary. Who knows, as I said before, perhaps your affair may be connected with mine after all, in which case I would but be advancing my own interests in aiding you."

"Do you mean that you have found some connection between the killing of Mr. Mora and——"

"Perhaps! I only say, perhaps! Do not press me to commit myself further. And now, give me twenty-four hours in which to study the case, will you?"

Mr. Barnes accepted the hint to go, and after cordially thanking Mr. Mitchel for his promised assistance, he went away lighter hearted. With Mr. Mitchel co-operating, he thought that only a few days would be needed to bring him to the truth.

After his departure Mr. Mitchel took up the newspaper, intending to read over the report of the inquest, when his eye rested upon a headline in the next column, which caused him to read the following:

"BRUTAL TREATMENT OF A CHILD.

"The Metropolitan Foundling Society have just had their attention drawn to a case which is peculiarly mon-

strous in its cruelty. It appears that one of their agents, on his regular tour through the East Side, was notified by the policeman on duty that a baby had been abandoned near by. Upon investigation the agent found that a row of tenements backed upon a small burial-ground, which of course had not been used for interments for many years, and is therefore rarely opened. Into this graveyard some fiend had thrown a girl baby, about a year old, and there left it, in a fitting place to starve to death. The infant, when discovered, was entirely naked, so that there was nothing about it which could serve as a means of identification. Inquiry among the inhabitants of the tenements, elicited the fact that for four days the child had been seen crawling about in the grass, playing among the headstones, yet no one had found time to investigate the affair, though someone had thrown bits of bread and crackers to the poor little baby, which it ravenously seized upon and devoured. To those living in uptown streets, dwelling in comfortable if not luxurious homes, it may seem incredible that this infant could be thus left, for so many days, with no one to go to its rescue. But these poor folks are themselves nigh unto starvation, working long dreary hours, under the killing influences of the dread sweatshop, with masters correcting them for a moment's idleness. Such as these have their better feelings dulled; such as these have no time to wonder whose baby this waif might be, or whether, after all, it may not have belonged to some-

one nearby, who would claim it before nightfall. Indeed, the wonder is that such as these even had the thought to throw food to the little one creeping about in the grass. But the horror is, that any human being could abandon a child to such a fate as only chance saved this tot from suffering. The fiend should be found and punished."

"Ah, yes!" said Mr. Mitchel, laying aside his paper. "Found and punished! That is the final, the only way that Society has of disposing of such cases. Mr. Barnes would approve. And what of the next case? Why, the same treatment of course. Arrest and punish. But the reporter here has lifted a corner of the veil and given us a glimpse of the sweatshop. There, they are manufacturing coats. Are they making anything else?" He took up the paper and read the article through once more, and as he put it down he exclaimed:

"Horrible! Monstrous! And yet Mr. Barnes thinks that the killing of Mr. Mora is the crime of the century. Ah, well, we shall widen the scope of your views some day, Mr. Barnes."

CHAPTER II.

"UNTO THE THIRD AND FOURTH"—FINGERS.

A HALF-HOUR later Mr. Mitchel entered the office of the Metropolitan Foundling Society, and from one of the clerks obtained further information relative to the foundling. The address of a woman who had first reported the case, as well as her name, Gertrude Griffin, was given to him and, upon his request, he was permitted to see the little waif, who was snugly tucked away in a cot on the floor above.

As Mr. Mitchel was entering the upper room, he met an acquaintance in the hallway. This was Colonel Payton, one of the directors of the Society.

The Colonel was a large man, with a fine head, and commanding mien. His hair was whitening, and his long side-whiskers, already white, made him look older than he really was. During the late civil war he had served his country faithfully, and had earned his epaulets by bravery on the field, having risen from the ranks to the position which he held when his command had been mustered out. Returning to New York after the war, he settled down to the peaceful occupation of making money; and by fortunate speculations in Wall

Street and investments in real estate, he had placed himself far above the need of further effort.

Therefore he had retired from active business, and for several years had devoted his time to church and charity. In this manner he had earned the reputation of being a useful member of society ; a philanthropist who gave freely, yet who deprecated indiscriminate alms giving, believing that the best good was to be attained by helping others to help themselves. He had therefore allied himself with several associations having the betterment of the poor as their aim.

Personally he was an exceedingly genial and pleasant companion, until you differed with him on one of his principles of life, when he would show his New England ancestry, being very “set.” He was a bachelor, and some said that he was a woman hater, which was denied by others, who declared that he eschewed the society of the opposite sex, because he had unsuccessfully wooed one, whom he had wished to make his bride. However this may have been, whenever the Colonel did choose to honor a social gathering with his presence he was sure of a warm reception. His evenings were usually spent at his club, where he was a conspicuous figure at the whist table, and whether or not he was a favorite with the ladies, certain it was, that he was honored, and even courted by his own sex, as a *bon vivant* and a *raconteur* of rare ability.

"Delighted to meet you, Mr. Mitchel," exclaimed the Colonel, recognizing that gentleman. "I thought you were on the other side?"

"I have just returned by the *Paris*," said Mr. Mitchel. "I see you are on your rounds. Inspecting one of your favorite charities?"

"Well, hardly that," said the Colonel, with a laugh. "I don't allow my charities, as you call them, to take up all of my time. But there is a case in hand at present to which I shall give my personal attention. Perhaps you have read of the horror in the morning papers?"

"Do you mean that little naked baby found in the graveyard?"

Mr. Mitchel was pleased to find that his companion was interested in this case, as he counted upon his garrulousness to obtain more of the facts than had escaped from the official mouth, sealed with red tape, which he had met below stairs.

"Yes," replied the Colonel. "That is a monstrous affair. Think of a mother throwing a baby less than a year old into a graveyard and leaving it there to starve. I intend to find that woman and——"

"How do you know it was the mother?" asked Mr. Mitchel, quietly. "It may have been the father who thus wished to rid himself of a burdensome offspring."

"Of course! Of course!" said the Colonel, irritated by the interruption, as well as by the suggestion that he might be in error. "But what difference does that

make? Mother or father, it is all the same to me. I will hunt down the culprit, and see that full punishment is meted out.”

“Punishment! Always punishment!” thought Mr. Mitchel. “How eagerly Society punishes! How little it does to prevent!” Then he added aloud:

“What would be your idea of a fitting punishment, Colonel?”

“I am sorry to say that my ideas and the law do not agree on that point. The law allots seven years in the penitentiary for abandonment of a child. But in this case there was an evident intent to kill. Otherwise the infant would have been placed on a doorstep, or other conspicuous spot where it could be found. If I had my way I would give the guilty party twenty years at least.”

“What good would that do,” asked Mr. Mitchel. He said it so quickly, and the words were such a surprise to the Colonel, that the latter was nonplussed for a moment, and then he blurted out excitably:

“What good would it do? It would teach him a lesson, and others as well, would n’t it? It would show people of this class that if they have children they must care for them, or go to prison, would n’t it?”

“I think it would be better,” said Mr. Mitchel, “to teach people that when they have children they must care for them, without going to prison.”

“A fine theory,” sneered the Colonel. “And how would you accomplish that, pray?”

“Oh, I do not say that it is a simple problem. But, Colonel, at present it seems to me that the law has a wrong aim in view. If a man abandons a child—I say a man, for it is the father who should support mother and child, and it is only through penury that the ordinary mother yields up her progeny. If the father, then, fails in his duty, the law locks him up, at present. How does this work? First, the man is placed where it becomes impossible for him to do that, for failing in which, he is held culpable. Secondly, the mother is left more helpless than before, for the hope of reclaiming the man to her side is taken from her. And lastly, the child is thrown into a public institution, which, however well maintained, is a poor substitute for a home with parental influence.”

“And how would you have it work?” asked the Colonel, still sneering, but interested in spite of himself.

“I have observed,” continued Mr. Mitchel, “that foundlings belong to two classes only. First, they are the children of the very poor to whom the added burden of another mouth to feed, is too great. The youngest born is abandoned in order that those who have preceded it, and who have earned a place in the parents’ hearts, may not suffer. In these cases I see a good field for charity. If we would care for these extra burdens of the poor, until such time when the parents might reclaim them, they would not be abandoned. If we also extended a helping hand to the parents, finding more

remunerative work for them, by putting hope into their hearts, they would have increased energy, and would soon learn to support, what now they cast adrift. The little ones would spend but their earlier years in charitable asylums, and would be taken home, when old enough to appreciate what home means.”

“And the other class?” asked the Colonel, this time without any sarcasm in his tones.

“Ah! That is the class which would be the more difficult to control and therefore would need the most stringent measures. These are the children of shame. The punishment should be compulsory marriage, and support of wife and child. In these cases the mothers may be, and often are as blameable as the fathers, though the men are the tempters. But surely the children are innocent, and should receive the full protection of the State. First, their birth should be legitimized by the marriage of their parents; and, second, the father should contribute to the support of his child.”

“Ah, very pretty in theory,” cried the Colonel. He was pleased to find a weak spot in Mr. Mitchel’s argument. “But suppose that the man has no means of supporting his child, or, worse yet, suppose that he be already a married man?”

“In the latter event, of course, a marriage between him and his victim would be impossible, but in any case, he could be made to support his child, which would be more just to the infant than the imprisonment of the man.”

“But how in the name of conscience can you make a man support a child, if there is no alternative punishment?”

“Oh! I did not say that there should be no punishment. I only argued against imprisonment. This is a fitting use for the whipping-post. Corporal punishment is sometimes more effectual than any other. For example, if all married men guilty of this crime, should be publicly flogged once a month for a year after conviction, I think much would be accomplished towards a regeneracy of the moral status of the community. But let me answer you as to the compulsory support of the child. If the man has means, it would be easy enough for the court to allot a specified monthly payment to the mother and child. To insure such payment, a part of the culprit's property could be placed under the guardianship of the public administrator; not actually confiscated, but so arranged that no disposition could be made of it, against the interests of the child.”

“But suppose the man has no visible means of support?”

“A man who can work, and won't work, must be made to work. If he can be made to work for the State, in prison, surely he can be compelled to work for his child, out of prison. I think if a man were flogged every week until he would make an honest effort to obtain employment, he would soon look eagerly for work. Of course he might do this and not succeed; in which case, when

he had proven his willingness to do his duty, he would have reached the same plane as the father in the first class, and would be a worthy object of assistance.”

“I guess we ’ll have to send you to the Legislature,” said the Colonel, who found that he was getting the worst of the argument, and so preferred to let the topic drop. “Would you like to see the latest applicant for assistance under your scheme?”

“I would, indeed,” said Mr. Mitchel, and together they entered.

The Colonel led the way across the room, the Matron rising from her chair and following them.

“I want to show this gentleman our newest boarder,” said the Colonel.

“She ’s a little angel,” said the Matron, turning down the coverlet.

“You mean she might have been,” said the Colonel, grimly. “That is what her parents hoped, Mrs. Martin.”

“The inhuman brutes!” exclaimed the Matron. “I wish I could see them both behind the bars. They ought to get twenty years at least.”

Mr. Mitchel smiled. The present system apparently is so universally acceptable that it would be a Herculean task to remodel the laws to meet a more scientific and philanthropic scope. Philanthropy towards criminals! How strange the words would sound in the public ear? The advocate of such a system would be considered a lunatic, or at least a crank.

Mr. Mitchel stooped over the crib and gazed into the great blue eyes which seemed unduly large, because of the pinched and starved little face. Yet the hands and feet were still fat and chubby, the four days of exposure not having been enough to reduce them in any apparent degree.

"She would be a pretty child if her face was not so thin," ventured Mr. Mitchel, feeling that he was at best but a poor judge of such young specimens of humanity.

"She would be pretty?" cried the Matron, indignantly. "She *is* pretty. The prettiest little girlie that has been in this room in many a day."

Mrs. Martin had once had a baby of her own, a tiny, sickly little thing, which had soon withered and died. But the yearnings of motherhood aroused by that little cherub had never quite died out, and when her husband was killed shortly afterward, leaving her alone in the world, and hopeless in her dearest desire, she had gladly accepted this position, where she could do unto others as she would have done for her own. Each baby placed in her care for a few days, reminded her of her own lost darling, and her heart went out to it so completely that the final separation always left her gloomy and despondent, a condition which would continue until the next outcast was brought in.

This baby in some manner had attracted her more than ordinarily, perhaps because of its unusually sad history, and she resented even praise which was not given

in full measure. So she lifted the little one up in her arms, and held her out for inspection.

“Did you ever see such pretty feet? Look at her toes, just as perfect as the Lord ever made. And see the dimples? Ain’t they just lovely?” She kissed each dimple rapturously, and then continued: “Just look at her hands. They are pretty enough to belong to the quality. Now I hold that the hands tell the breeding better than anything, and one or the other of the parents of this young lady is high bred, or I’m no judge.”

She looked about as though defying contradiction, but neither man cared to dispute the point with her, so Mrs. Martin’s testimony stood, as the testimony of all experts should.

“She certainly has beautiful hands,” said Mr. Mitchel, by way of recovering the good graces of the Matron. “Just look at them, Colonel.”

“Oh, I have already admired all the young lady’s points,” said the Colonel. “Have n’t I, Mrs. Martin?”

He reached forward and playfully tickled the youngster in the ribs, whereupon she grasped his thumb in her hand, and gripped it tightly.

“Indeed you have, Colonel,” said the Matron. “I must say you seem to have taken quite a fancy to the baby, and see there now, how she takes to you. I wonder, Colonel, you don’t adopt the dear little cherub.”

“Adopt! I adopt a baby?” The Colonel laughed heartily. “Imagine an old soldier like me, and a bachelor besides, adopting a baby. And a girl baby in the bargain.” Again he laughed, while the baby, as though advocating her cause, stretched out her other arm, and danced as though desiring to be taken, whereupon the Matron delightedly handed over her charge, which snuggled up against the old soldier, still clinging to his great thumb.

“There now,” said Mrs. Martin, “ain’t that a pretty picture? And as to your being a bachelor, the more shame to you. I hold that bachelors should do their share towards supporting the children in the world, as well as others. There’s many a poor father with more brats than he can feed, while there’s others with plenty of money that just shirks. They just leaves the babies for other people to raise, no offense to you, of course, Colonel!”

Mrs. Martin added her last words hastily, as the Colonel had suddenly, and seemingly without reason, stopped laughing, and was handing back the child. Perhaps she had been too familiar with one of her superiors, but she was so anxious to see this little tot secure a good berth in the world that she had forgotten herself for the time.

“You are talking stuff and nonsense, Mrs. Martin,” said the Colonel, stiffly, as he yielded up the child. “You are old enough to have better sense. I am aston-

ished. Come, Mitchel, if you have seen enough we'll go. Or perhaps you are looking for a child for adoption?”

“No! Not that,” said Mr. Mitchel, earnestly, and looking squarely at the Colonel. “But I would like you to arrange it so that no disposition will be made of this child without my knowledge.”

“Certainly, if you wish it. But why?”

“Because I mean to put my theory into practice. I mean to discover the father of that child, and compel him to support it.”

“The devil you do!”

The Colonel was astounded. Mr. Mitchel was evidently crazier than he had thought. Theories were well enough, but if one tried to put them into practice his mind must be weakening.

“Such is my intention,” persisted Mr. Mitchel.

“I wish you joy in your venture,” said the Colonel, with his most satirical sneer.

Before following the Colonel from the room, Mr. Mitchel stooped over and kissed the baby, and held her hand in his for a moment. He had imagined something, and wished to confirm or dismiss the idea. While the baby had been clasping the Colonel's thumb, he had noted a peculiarity about the Colonel's hand. The knuckle of the third finger was abnormally large, and consequently the little finger seemed quite curved at the end, from lying against the protruding joint next

to it. It had also seemed to him that the baby's fingers were similarly fashioned. He therefore looked at the hand more attentively, now that he held it within his own, and sure enough he found the large joint of the third finger, and the curved end of the fourth.

"And you think this hand proves blue blood, Mrs. Martin?"

"I do," said the Matron, positively.

"Then we will make her blue-blooded father provide for her," replied Mr. Mitchel.

"That 's the talk, sir, and luck go with you," said Mrs. Martin, her first opinion of Mr. Mitchel much altered in that gentleman's favor.

"Take care of the little lady till her father calls for her," added Mr. Mitchel.

"That I will, sir, and Heaven bless you for a good man."

Leaving the building, Mr. Mitchel crossed over to Third Avenue, and boarded an Elevated train, going down town as far as the Chatham Square station, where he descended to the street. One minute's walk brought him to the quaint old burial-ground, rising ten feet above the street level, and guarded by a brick wall, surmounted by an iron fence with spear-topped pickets. As Mr. Mitchel stood peering into the place, an Elevated train went by with a rumbling noise, reminding him that he was in one of the city's most public thoroughfares. Yet, this little graveyard, passed by thousands daily speeding

down to their place of business, and surrounded by tenements crowded to suffocation, had been chosen as a fitting spot in which to abandon a child. And only one of the many human beings thereabouts had found time to interfere in behalf of the stray waif. What an astonishing commentary upon civilization, that such things could be.

Mr. Mitchel passed on to the next corner, and turning, soon found himself in front of the number given to him as the address of Gertrude Griffin. He paused a moment, considering what would be the best way to find the woman, and then accosted a young “hoodlum” of ten, who came out of the house.

“Do you know whether Gertrude Griffin is at home?” he asked.

“Naw! How sh’d I know? I ain’t her keeper.”

“But she lives here, does she not?”

“Maybe she do, and maybe she don’t. I ain’t runnin’ this lodgin’ house, so I ain’t ’quainted with the hull gang what sleeps here.”

“Do you suppose I could go upstairs?”

“Sure! There ain’t nobody holdin’ you, is there?”

With a laugh the incorrigible youngster ran off down the street, leaving his questioner as wise as before they had met. A number of small children, with pinched faces, and inquiring eyes, had gathered about the well-dressed man, who was something of a curiosity in the neighborhood, and stood gazing at him expectantly.

Believing that he might succeed better with one of the girls, Mr. Mitchel accosted a bright-looking child, about eight, and asked her if she knew where Gertrude Griffin lived ; but the little one shook her head negatively, and shyly retreated behind her companions. Patting her caressingly on the head, he went into the house.

The hallway was so narrow that, leaving the sunlight without, he found at first that he could see nothing at all, the darkness by contrast being so great. In a few moments his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and he made out that there was a narrow passage-way, on either side of which he could see three doors, but at the opposite end nothing but inky blackness. Was it possible that human beings lived in such structures as this ? A loud scuffle, a scream, and the angry voices of a man and woman in drunken brawl, coming from the mysterious realms somewhere over his head, answered his mental query.

He knocked at the door nearest to him, and, after a long wait, it was opened a few inches, and a black-bearded head, with two shining eyes, looked out at him.

“ Vat do you vant ? ” was the greeting in foreign accent.

“ Does Gertrude Griffin live in this building ? ” asked Mr. Mitchel.

“ How in de vorld should I know ? ” was the answer, accompanied by a noisy bang of the door as the head disappeared, shutting out the whirring sound of sewing-machines which had given evidence of life within.

The man evidently thought it a preposterous proposition that he should know the names of the other occupants of the building in which he had his habitation, and indeed this is true in much more fashionable quarters of the great metropolis; for uptown, where the enormous “tenement” houses, have the higher sounding title of “Hotel” or “Apartment-house,” the inmates know as little of each other as they do in the “slums.”

Thus it began to be apparent to Mr. Mitchel that the street and number was an inadequate address in this neighborhood, but he was determined to find the woman, so he went to the next door, where he received no response to continual knockings; and then to the next, where he found a woman who could only speak some foreign jargon quite unfamiliar to his ears; and then across the hall where a drunken brute of a man reviled him with curses; and so from door to door, and up one flight after another, for he found an unlighted stairway at the back of the hall, until at last he stood before a door upon the sixth landing, and upon asking the woman who opened to him:

“Does Gertrude Griffin live here?” received for answer:

“Yes. Are you the Coroner?”

“Why, no,” replied Mr. Mitchel, astonished at the question. “Why do you ask? Did you expect the Coroner!”

"Oh, yes! That is, I suppose so."

"But why? Did you send for him?"

"No."

"Then why did you think he would come?"

"I thought they always did in times like this. My baby's dead, you know. She died without a doctor." She gulped down the sobs that choked her utterance and assumed that stolid face so common among those hardened to misery.

"Let me come in," said Mr. Mitchel, gently, and the woman made way for him to enter.

He stood in a room about nine feet square, ventilated by a small window opening upon an air-shaft, and lighted by a skylight let in the roof, which was grimy and darkened by the accumulated dirt of years. Opening from this, the living room, in which was a table and a cook stove, there was a yet smaller sleeping-room, into which not enough light entered to make its contents visible from where he stood. As he recalled the fact that, as stifling and dark as was this "flat," being at the top of the house, it must of necessity be better in both respects than the floors below, he wondered how one human being could plan such a building for others to live in. In a recess next to the chimney place, was a wooden structure which he supposed was the wash-tub, and upon the closed cover of this he saw a tiny form covered with a bit of worn but clean cloth, which might once have been a sheet.

“This is your baby?” said he, reverently lifting the cloth.

“Yes, sir,” said the woman, with a sob.

Mr. Mitchel heaved a sigh as he gazed upon the thin little corpse, too evidently dead from want of nourishment.

“Your first baby?” he asked.

“No, sir. My fourth.”

“Your fourth? Then you have three children alive?”

Mr. Mitchel looked around the place and wondered where they all slept, but her reply explained matters.

“No sir,” said the stricken mother, “they are all dead. They always live about a year, and then they waste away. I think teething does it, and the hot weather, sir. It’s awful hot, here, even on the top floor. I moved up, though the stairs is hard, hoping it would be better for the little one. But you see it’s no use. God is against me, I guess, though what I’ve done I don’t know.”

To such as these it is hard to bring the lesson of the eternal justice and love of the Almighty Father. Left alone in their wretchedness by their fellow-man, what wonder that they lose faith in God?

“You have done nothing,” said Mr. Mitchel. “What has been done is the fault of others. Your condition is a result of their greed and selfishness. You are not to blame, but neither must you think that the Almighty has forgotten you.”

"I'm sure I try not to, sir, but sometimes it's hard, mighty hard, to know what to think." She bent her head and wept softly.

"Tell me," said Mr. Mitchel, soothingly, "how has all this come about? You have a husband, have you not? Cannot he support you?"

"Yes, sir, I'm a proper married woman, and my husband's a sober, good intendin' man, and he does his best. But times has been hard with us. What with the strikes and the Italians coming over, and one thing and another, we've been goin' down these last three years. Patrick, my husband's an Irishman, sir, gets odd jobs now and then, but steady work don't seem to come his way. Yet he's a good man at his trade, too. He's a bricklayer."

"Where is he now?"

"Baby died this mornin' about five o'clock. We was both up with her all night. Pat went on like mad, and went out early. He ain't come back. I thought maybe he'd gone to notify the police. He'd have to do that, would n't he?"

"I suppose so. But, Mrs. Griffin, do not be despondent. Of course, death at any time is a dreadful thing, but remember, it comes to the rich as well as to the poor."

"Yes! I know other people has their sorrows, but the rich has some comforts too, I guess. That makes the sorrow easier to bear, I fancy." She spoke bitterly.

"Come, my good woman, you must not speak so. It

is wrong of the rich to neglect the poor, but it is also wrong of the poor to look upon the rich as their enemies. Many of the wealthiest would be only too glad to do away with all the poverty in the land, if only they knew how. Fortunately, I am a rich man, and I can at least help one deserving family. So cheer up. I will see that your baby is properly buried, and I will find work for your good man, since you tell me he is a sober, hard-working fellow.”

“Oh! May Heaven bless you, and may God forgive me for sayin’ that he had forgotten us.”

She fell upon her knees and would have kissed his hand had he permitted. He raised her from the floor and made her take a seat on the one chair in the room, and now that there had come to her something to arouse her from the stolidity of despair, she began to weep copiously.

At this moment the door was rudely opened by a vicious kick of a man’s boot, and a drunken, rough-looking man tottered into the room. At sight of him the woman emitted a scream and sprang to his side.

“My God, Patrick! Patrick!” she cried. “You’ve been drinkin’! You’ve come home drunk!”

“You’re a liar,” cried the fellow, rudely pushing her away from him. “I’m not drunk! I’m crazy, that’s all. Crazy! I’m crazy from losin’ my child, so keep away from me, or I’ll do you a hurt. And who’s this bird with the fine feathers?” He noticed Mr. Mitchel,

and turned upon him threateningly. "Who's this man you've brought in here?"

"Oh Patrick! Pat, dear, don't carry on so. This gentleman's come to help us. Be civil to him, there's a good man." Then turning to Mr. Mitchel she added entreatingly, "Don't mind him, sir. He's been drinkin', but it's all because of the baby. He's a sober man, sir, indeed, indeed he is. Don't hold this up against him." Then to her husband again: "O Pat! Pat! What made you? And I've just been tellin' what a good man you are, and you come home like this!"

"Like what? I'll come home as I like. It's my home, such as it is, and them as don't like it can leave it. And as for you, with your pretty clothes, and pretty face, I've half a mind to do you up, comin' up here an' gloatin' over the misery of a poor man."

He faced Mr. Mitchel and raised an arm threateningly. Mr. Mitchel grasping his wrist held it firmly, and speaking in a tone of command, he said:

"Patrick Griffin, you've been drinking."

"I've not," snarled the man, trying to free his wrist.

"You are drunk now," said Mr. Mitchel, "and you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"He will be! He will be, when he gets sober," wailed the wife.

"I believe so," said Mr. Mitchel, "and for your sake, and for his, too, since you speak for him, I will forget this affair. I will do all that I promised for you. And

now, Patrick, lie down, and regain your senses as soon as possible."

The man had found himself mastered, and was standing surlily looking down. He now made little resistance as Mr. Mitchel drew him towards the bed in the next room, and threw him upon it.

Mr. Mitchel returned to the wife, who again and again protested that her husband must have been crazed by the loss of their child to have taken a drink, which was not hard to believe, all things considered.

Mr. Mitchel again assured her that proper arrangements would be made for the funeral of the child, as well as for the future of herself and husband, and then approached the subject which had prompted his visit.

"Now, Mrs. Griffin," he began, "I must tell you why I came here. I want to know all about the baby that was taken from the graveyard back of here."

"It's not much I know, sir. I was up on the roof one day last week, tryin' to get a bit more air for my own baby, and chancin' to look down, I thought I saw a young one in the grass in the graveyard, I did n't think much of that, but the next day I saw it again, and the next day plainer still, 'cause it had crawled out to an open spot where the grass was n't so high, and there it lay, as naked as the day it was born, lookin' up to the heaven from which it came. I thought that strange, and I would have gone down to see about it, though before that, I supposed it belonged to some of the people down stairs, and had been put through the window to play in

the grass. But my own baby was so poorly that day, that I could n't spare the time to look after anybody else's. But the next mornin', my baby was a bit brighter, so I went on the roof and looked down. Sure enough there was the little one, in the same spot where it was the day before. I suppose it was gettin' too weak to crawl about. So I went through the house, but I could n't find no one to claim it, though two or three with windows on the graveyard, had seen the baby. But they all thought it belonged to someone in the house, same's I did. Down in the Jew's place on the first floor there was a young girl who had been throwin' food to the baby, and from the way she spoke to me, I almost believe it might be hers, only she's that young, it don't seem possible. Anyway, that same day I told the policeman about it, and he sent word to the Society, and they took it away. That's all I know."

"What is the name of the Jewish girl who fed the child?"

"Rebecca Polaski, or some such queer name. Anyway her first name's Rebecca. She lives in the back, with her mother and two sisters, and she sews in the sweatshop in front."

"What day was it on which you first saw the baby?"

"Let me see! It was last Wednesday. I remember 'cause it was the same day baby took sick."

Mr. Mitchel mused a moment and was struck by the fact that this was the day after the murder of Mr. Mora.

Thanking the woman for what she had told him, and again promising her his assistance, he went below, determined, if possible, to interview Rebecca Polaski.

As he was leaving the place he was once more impressed with the gloom of it, and paused to ask :

“Do you know who owns this building?”

“We pays our rent to an agent, Mr. Mortimer, but I think the real owner is a Colonel Payton.”

CHAPTER III.

REBECCA POLASKI'S STORY.

MR. MITCHEL groped his way gingerly down into the increasing gloom of the stairway. At the third landing he passed someone, whose sex he vaguely guessed by the fumes of whiskey which assailed his nostrils. At length he reached the bottom, and stood in the lower hallway looking towards the light at the street door, which made the narrow passage strikingly resemble a tunnel. At the first door to the left he stopped and knocked, receiving, as upon his first effort, no response. Therefore he passed on, and rapped upon the door nearest the street, and once more the bearded head of the proprietor protruded just far enough to inquire what was wanted, while the whirring of the sewing-machines behind him made his squeaky voice scarcely audible.

"I wish to speak with Rebecca Polaski," said Mr. Mitchel.

"She's busy," was the curt reply ; and the man tried to close the door, but was forestalled by Mr. Mitchel, who thrust his foot between, remarking firmly :

"But I tell you I must see her."

"Oh, vell, dot makes a diff'rence." He came out into the hall, and closed the door behind him. "Vhy is it dot you must see Repecca? Vhat do you vant vid her?"

"I wish to speak with her about a matter of importance. I will not detain her more than ten minutes."

"Ten minutes? Holy Abraham! How do you suppose she can fool away so much time? She's got her livin' to make, my friendt. She could n't afford to stop vork for ten minutes. Ve are not millionaires down here."

"How much could she earn in ten minutes?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

This disconcerted the old Jew, and he hesitated before replying, but presently, with a cunning leer, and rubbing his hands together after the manner of his tribe, he drawled out:

"As to dot, my friendt, dot's her pizness, und it's not my pizness to gif away oder people's pizness. Put she could make enough to puy a loaf of pread, my tear, und a loaf of pread is a good deal in dese hard times."

"A loaf of bread, eh? Let me see," said Mr. Mitchel, making a quick calculation. "A loaf of bread is five cents, and five cents for ten minutes is thirty cents an hour, or about three dollars a day. Is that what she earns?"

"Vhat a man you are at figgers," said the Jew slyly. "You ought to be a pawnbroker. But you're wrong,

my tear. I did n't say a fife cent loaf ; she might puy a dree cent loaf, ain't it ? ”

“ Very well. Then she does not earn more than thirty cents an hour. Tell her to come out and talk to me, and I will pay her fifty cents for her lost hour.”

Mr. Mitchel thought that a rest of even an hour might be joyfully acceptable to the poor sweatshop slave, and would be cheaply purchased. But the greedy ears of the Jew were doubly attentive, now that money was offered. With a deprecating gesture of his most expressive hands, he whined :

“ Impossible, my tear. An hour ? A whole hour for fifty cents ? You undervalue de vorth of de girl's time. Fifty cents for a whole hour ! Impossible ! Impossible ! ”

“ But you have just admitted that her time is not worth as much as thirty cents an hour.”

“ You're no pizness man, my friendt. You're too rich to understand de leetle details of trade. Dhirty cents an hour might be de wholesale price of Repecca's time, but for one hour, dot's retail, don't you see ? ”

“ No, I don't see. Explain yourself ! ”

“ Vid pleasure. I hires de girl py de month, so I get her time cheaper dan you can get it, if you only vant one hour. It's very simple.”

He smiled blandly, as though making the most ordinary statement ; but Mr. Mitchel, perceiving the avaricious intent in the man's mind, began to be slightly angry, and therefore spoke with some asperity :

“You just now told me that the girl cannot earn more than thirty cents an hour——”

“For herself, see? For herself! For me she might be making a couple of dollars. So as her time pelongs to me, py contract, if I let her off, vhy I'm de looser, my friendt, and I'm a poor, hard vorkin' man, vid a large family, und——”

Mr. Mitchel was too disgusted to discuss the subject further, so, taking a two-dollar bill from his pocket-book, he placed it in the outstretched palm of the old screw, and said shortly :

“There's your price. Now send the girl out to me.”

The Jew clutched the bill hungrily, yet, either his curiosity to know what the stranger wished with the girl, or some lingering qualms of conscience, made him hesitate, and he said :

“You're very kind, put dis is a leetle irregular. I shall haf to ask vhat you vant vid de girl? You see she's a respectable girl, and if any harm vas to come to her, I should never forgive myself! Never, so help me Abraham!”

This exasperated Mr. Mitchel, and he angrily exclaimed :

“Silence, you miserable wretch! Send the girl out to me at once, or I'll have an inspector down here within an hour, to look into this shop of yours.”

This threat frightened the old man, for he hastily disappeared through the door of his apartment, crying :

“What 's de use of gettin' madt ?”

A few minutes later, a black-haired, slim, and rather pretty girl came out, and stared wonderingly at Mr. Mitchel. Her skin was like putty, her eyes sunken, her cheeks hollow, and she looked tired almost to the limit of her endurance ; yet, withal, she had traces of beauty about her, even as the dead and faded rose gives evidence of what it once has been.

Rebecca Polaski was really not more than seventeen ; but the Jewish maidens attain maturity earlier than their Christian sisters, and the fulness of her figure excused the doubt in Mrs. Griffin's mind, though as Mr. Mitchel gazed into her sad young eyes, he thought it highly improbable that she knew ought of the foundling, save what she might have learned by chance. However, she had fed the little one with remnants from her own meagre supply, and whatever she did know, might be well worth the inquiry.

“You are Rebecca Polaski ?” he asked gently.

“Yes, sir,” she replied with little or no accent.

“You live in the back rooms ?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Take me into them. I wish to have a talk with you.” Then, as she hesitated, and threw a half-frightened glance behind her, he continued ; “Have no fear. You will lose nothing. I have arranged with your employer so that you may remain out an hour.”

The prospect of so long a rest lighted her eyes with a

momentary beam of pleasure, and Mr. Mitchel was more than repaid for the money given in her behalf. She led the way into the back rooms, and opening the shutters disclosed a view of the graveyard, only a few feet beneath. She then dropped wearily upon an empty soap box, and motioned her visitor to a seat upon the one chair, the cane of which was almost entirely torn away. The flat was about the same as the one which he had seen on the upper floor, though the window opening on the outer world let in light and air which made the place so much the more cheerful.

How strange that what should be freest, and most plentifully at the command of all, should become an actual commodity, through the cupidity of mankind ! For one man erects a tall building, darkening the homes of others, and then sets a higher rental on those apartments in his own structure, which are best ventilated and lighted. What wonder that the communists, socialists, and other revolutionary sects, find attentive audiences ? Mr. Mitchel thought of this and sighed as he asked :

“What rent do you pay for this place ?”

“Three dollars a week,” was the reply, and then she added : “We could have the flat next door for two and a half, but it is dreadfully dark, though we could put up with that, 'cause we 're mostly at home only in the night time. But there 's no air except from the shaft, and the horrid smells made my mother sick.”

So even on this ground-floor there was an extra charge for a window !

“What do you earn in the shop?” was Mr. Mitchel’s next inquiry.

“When I feel strong and well I can make seventy-five cents a day in the shop, but mostly only fifty ; and maybe twenty-five cents more doing extra work.”

Mr. Mitchell looked savagely towards the sweatshop, the proprietor of which had charged him two dollars for releasing the girl from her task, when he himself paid her such a pittance for the day’s work.

“How many hours a day do you work ?” he asked.

“About ten, though sometimes longer, if I ’m tired and don’t finish up.”

“What do you mean by extra work ?”

“Sometimes he lets us take work home to do nights, and he pays us half price for that.”

“What ? You work ten hours for a day’s task, and then he pays you half rates for overtime ? Why should you get less for night work, than for work in the day ?”

“Well, you see, he says working in the night, when our eyes are tired, we can’t do as good work. We only get the cheaper sort to take home.”

Mr. Mitchel could find no words with which to express his feelings. The utter selfishness of such sophistry, the greed of the man who would thus swindle his poor employees, utterly amazed him. And the oddest thing was that the girl made no complaint, accepting

her lot as a matter of course, a fact beyond dispute. Yet, observe her position ! She worked ten hours per day for her slave-driving master, earning enough per week to pay the greedy landlord for her shelter : the mother and sisters, by similar drudgery finding the food and clothing for the family.

"What is the name of your employer," he asked presently.

"Herman Polaski."

"Polaski ? But that is your name. Is he a relative ?"

"Yes, sir. My uncle."

Her uncle ! Comment seemed superfluous. Mr. Mitchel paused to think, and the girl rambled on.

"Uncle Herman 's been very kind to us. I don't know what we would have done without his help. Starved I guess. You see, father was sick a long, long time, an' all the money we had, went to the doctor an' for funeral expenses. Then we had nothing. So Uncle gave us all work in his shop, though he said he did n't need any more hands, an' it was just taking money out of his own pocket to hire us. We don't earn much, but anyway we 've lived on our wages for over a year now."

The girl's gratitude was in strange contrast with the greed of her father's brother, who had not hesitated to benefit by the distress of his relatives. Mr. Mitchel felt a great sympathy for this poor family of women, and would gladly have opened his pocket-book in their behalf, but he realized the magnitude of this problem of

aid to the poor. He had gone into but two homes ; in one he had promised assistance, and in the other he found the same need, inviting the same remedy. But were he to go on, and visit tenement after tenement, home after home, how soon would his resources be at an end, and how little would he have accomplished, towards lessening the suffering on the great East Side ! He felt the helplessness of the situation more than he had ever done when theorizing about it, and for the moment he decided that he might better confine himself to his special object.

“I have heard that you saw the baby which was taken from the graveyard next door,” he began.

“Yes, sir,” she replied, and then stared at him, evidently alarmed at his question.

“Tell me about it,” he asked persuasively. “Tell me all that you know.”

She looked at him sadly and thoughtfully, and then, to his astonishment, burst into tears, exclaiming :

“Oh, don’t put me in prison ! Please don’t take me to prison ! Mother ’d starve if you locked me up !”

“My dear girl,” said Mr. Mitchel, soothingly. “What are you saying ? What have you done ? Why should you be put in prison ?”

She endeavored to control herself and finally between her sobs he caught the words :

“Don’t—don’t—they put—wit—witnesses,—in—in jail ?”

At last he understood. This girl knew something, but was not herself guilty of any wrong. She had witnessed the crime which had been committed, and she knew enough of our laws to understand that she could be held a prisoner, as a witness needed by the state, under a law which thus works great injustice to many.

"There ! there !" said he. "Don't weep ! You have nothing to fear. I am not an officer, and you shall not be locked up. I promise you that, but I wish you to tell me all that you know. Come, won't you trust me ?"

"Yes—sir—I 'll—trust you," she answered timidly, wiping away her tears. Then after a few moments she had composed herself, and began her story :

"You see, sir, one night last week, I had some extra work to do, an' I tried hard to finish it, 'cause mother needed the money for medicine. She 's got a bad cough. But I was so tired that I could n't sew, an' about nine o'clock I had to go to bed. But I could n't sleep very well. Every now an' then I 'd hear mother cough, an' I 'd think of the work I had n't finished, an' I 'd try to get up to go at it again. But I was so dead with sleep too, that I just could n't. But after a long time I heard the clock strike twelve, an' I knew that if I was goin' to get the work done, I 'd have to get up, sleep or no sleep. So I made a jump an' landed on the floor, in a heap. I guess I hurt myself a little, 'cause it woke me up complete. Then I thought I was suffocatin', the room was so hot

an' stifling, an' I went to the window, an' stood breathin' the fresh air. That 's how I came to see him."

"Whom did you see?" asked Mr. Mitchel, eagerly.

"A man. At first I could n't make out what he was doin'. He was walkin' about stealthy like, an' he had a bundle in his arms. He came pretty close to the window, 'cause he was walkin' near the wall, but he had his head down when I first seen him, an' then afterwards he had his back to me. It was dark, too, bein' very cloudy. Well, he went a little way out, to the tree you see there, an' he stooped down and began to fumble with the bundle. I could see he was unwrappin' somethin', but I could n't make out what it was, 'cause he laid it behind the tombstone. Then he stood up straight for a minute, an' just then the cloud went away an' the moon shone out bright, an' I could see his face just as plain as anything."

"Did you know him?"

"No, but I 'm good at rememberin' faces!"

"You mean that you would know him again?"

"Anywhere? I 'd pick him out of a million! The moon shinin' on his face made it look like a ghost, an' it 's ha'nted me ever since. Why, in the dark o' nights, if I shut my eyes I see that face starin' at me! Oh, yes! I 'd know him again."

"You say you saw him place the child behind a tombstone?"

"No! I did n't see the baby then, though I heard a

baby cry, but that 's common 'round this neighborhood, an' I did n't think anything of it. But I seen him put somethin' behind the stone, and when I seen the baby in the grass the next day, I felt sure the man had put it there."

"What did he do after you saw his face? Did he see you in the moonlight?"

"No! I don't think he was exactly lookin' my way, though his face was turned so 's I could see it. He stood just a minute, then he picked up somethin' from the grass, an' he went over behind another tombstone, where I could see him though, an' he dug a hole an' put whatever he had in it. Then he stood up an' trampled down the grass with his feet. Then he watched his chance, when no one was passin', and climbed over the fence, an' that 's the last I seen of him."

"And when did you discover that he had left a baby in the grass?"

"I sat up the rest of the mornin' sewin', till time to go to breakfast. We had some bread and milk I remember, an' after eatin' I went to the window to scrape the crumbs out of the plates, when I heard a baby cry. This time it sounded so near, I looked down, an' I nearly dropped the plate, I was so surprised an' so scared, to see that little baby without any clothes on, crawlin' about in the grass."

"But why were you alarmed?"

"I knew right off that the man had left the baby an'

I 'd seen him do it, an' I was afraid it would be found out, an' I would be arrested 'cause I knew about it. An' you see we just barely make enough to live on now, an' what would mother do if she did n't have me to help her?"

"But I heard that you threw food to the baby," said Mr. Mitchel.

"I had to. I fretted all that day thinkin' about what had happened an' wonderin' if the baby would be found, an' if the police would come an' ask me questions. An' that seemed so likely, 'cause our rooms open right on the graveyard. An' I knew that if they asked me what I knew, I 'd just blurt the whole thing out, an' then where 'd I be? Locked up for a certainty, till they found the man an' made me identify him. Then I got another idea, that made my blood freeze in my veins. Suppose nobody found the baby? It would die! It would starve to death! An' would n't I be held for that? Would n't I have helped the man to kill the baby, by not tellin' what I knew? So you see it looked like I 'd have to go to prison anyway, but I thought I 'd prevent the baby from dyin'. So I just made an excuse an' I went to our rooms intendin' to throw it some food, but I could n't see it anywhere. An' when I thought it had crawled away where I could n't throw food to it, it just made me sick an' weak. I was that scared I dropped in a heap on the floor an' leaned against the window-sill, an' cried. Then I happened to look up, an' my

heart gave a big jump, for there was the baby crawlin' from behind a tombstone. I called to the poor little dear, an' she stopped an' looked up at me, an' smiled. She seemed to know that I meant to help her. Then I got some bread an' soaked it in milk, an' I dropped it down. You ought to have seen the little thing come right for it, an' pretty soon she had it in her hands an' was suckin' away for dear life. Then I went back to my work more light-hearted."

"And you fed the child after that, did you not?"

"Yes, sir. I think she got to know me, 'cause when I 'd go to the window to throw her the bread, she 'd be waitin' an' she always looked up an' smiled like. Oh, dear! I 'd have given my life to go down and bring her up stairs, but I did n't dare, I was that afraid of the police. But at last I told Mrs. Griffin about my feedin' the baby, an' she told the policeman."

"Two things that you have told me are very important, Miss Polaski. You say, in the first place, that you saw the man's face, and that you would know him again?"

"Anywhere! I would know him among a million!"

"Very well, I may ask you to point him out to me at some time. The other thing of importance is, that you say the man buried something behind one of the tombstones. I wish you to point out as nearly as you can the spot where you saw him digging."

She went to the window and indicated a headstone

which stood in the shadow of the tree near-by, and taking the chance of being observed from the street, Mr. Mitchel stepped upon the window-sill and dropped to the ground. It was not long before he found where the sod had been overturned and replaced. Scratching away the loose earth, his fingers came upon something which he drew forth and held up before him. It was a baby's slip, in one corner of which he found what he hoped would be a name. Instead it proved to be a tiny flower done in embroidery silk.

Returning to the house by climbing through the window, he showed this to the girl and asked :

“What flower do you call that?”

Without hesitation she replied :

“A lily of the valley.”

“A lily of the valley,” murmured Mr. Mitchel. “And the valley was the valley of the shadow of death,” he mused, as he took his departure,

CHAPTER IV.

SLIPPERY SAM.

MR. MITCHEL left the tenement house with mixed feelings. He believed that he had made considerable progress in the investigation, and thought that, in his place, Mr. Barnes would have been proud of himself ; yet he felt depressed. Remembering his own wealth, and his luxurious home up town, such penury as he had just witnessed made him dissatisfied with himself.

He went directly to an undertaker, and gave orders for the burial of Mrs. Griffin's child, and he sent a plentiful supply of groceries to her house ; nevertheless he could not avoid the thought that this was but a trifle compared with what the rich might do for the poor.

He next went to Apollo Hall. Here he thought that he might divert his mind, for here it was that young Mora claimed to have passed the night on which his father was killed. As his mind reverted to the Mora case, Mr. Mitchel wondered at the sudden interest which he had taken in the other, and smiled as he thought of how little Mr. Barnes would relish his neglect of his "crime of the century."

Apollo Hall, situated as it is in the very heart of the East Side slums, which in the minds of those who have only read of the section, are inevitably associated with degradation, dirt, and crime, is a surprise to the visitor. The building itself is attractive in its architecture, and inviting in its general aspect. On the first floor there is a bar-room, from which a wide staircase leads to the hall above. This is spacious, and prettily decorated with bunting, which hangs from the polished rafters. The ceiling is high, and the floor waxed smooth for dancing. Here take place the weddings, balls, soirées, lectures, indignation meetings, political conclaves, and occasional riots that enliven the vicinity.

Mr. Mitchel looked around with interest, and having read an announcement that a professor of dancing would begin his regular season on a stated date, and that the charge as usual would be ten cents per lesson, he at last understood why it is that the children of the street, dance as well to the tunes of the piano-organs, as do the graduates of Marwig at the *débutante's* ball.

Leaning against the bar he found a dispenser of drinks, who was easily induced to talk, and after a few general remarks by way of introducing his topic, he asked :

“Do you know this Mr. Mora who has been accused of killing his father?”

“Never heard of him till I saw his name in the paper,” replied the barkeeper with a coarse laugh.

"But he claimed that he was in this place on that night," persisted Mr. Mitchel.

"Yes, I know he did. He proved his alibi as neat as wax. I guess he's fly, that fellow."

"But are you not pretty well acquainted with the people who come here?"

"Well, rather! There don't nobody get in without my seeing him. I keep the door."

"And if Mr. Mora had been here, would you not have seen him?"

The barkeeper, by way of reply, winked one eye knowingly, grinned, and with a flourish slapped upon the bar the drink which he had been mixing for his customer.

"Well then," continued Mr. Mitchel, "perhaps you know the two men who swore at the inquest that they saw Mr. Mora here?"

"Oh, yes! I know them right enough!"

"Are they reliable?"

"Re-li-able?" repeated the barkeeper, pronouncing each syllable separately, and, accenting the last two with significant emphasis, he laughed at his own wit, as he continued his rude joke. "Well, now, you've just hit them off. They're liable to lie, and to re-lie according to price offered. Why, for a silver quarter with a hole in it, either one of that pair would swear his mother was a cigar-store Indian. So you see what a beautiful alibi they let that duck off on. Oh, I tell you this is a

great town for some folks, especially them that has the price, and pays their way."

"Then you do not believe that Mora was here?"

"Oh, I don't go as far as to say what I believe. I'm an unbeliever, I am. All I say is it ain't proven that he was here. He might have been, you know, under some other name. Only if he was, them fellows told the truth for once in their lives, and that would be queer, the both of them honest the same day. That would be funny." He chuckled till his fat form shook like a bag of jelly.

"Still, as you say," pursued Mr. Mitchel, "it is possible after all that he was here?"

"Oh! Yes! It's possible! Anything's possible. To-day might be Tuesday, only it ain't."

"Still on the chance that, as you suggest, he has visited this Hall, and is known to you under another name, I should like to have an opportunity of seeing him here. He claims that he comes here to study the condition of the poor, but I think it more probable that if he comes at all there is some other attraction."

"In petticoats, eh!" said the barkeeper with a laugh. "Say! You ain't no fool yourself. Are you a detective?"

He asked this last question so suddenly, and looked at Mr. Mitchel so attentively, while trying to seem busy polishing a glass, that Mr. Mitchel instantly decided that it would be wise to disabuse his mind of that idea, if he

hoped to retain his friendly aid. Therefore he said without a moment's hesitation :

“Oh, no ! I am a reporter.”

“Then you're welcome, any time, and I'm at your service.” A certain brightening up of the man's countenance assured Mr. Mitchel that his answer had been a wise one. The fellow continued : “Say, you've got that Mora chap dead to rights. If he comes down here, he don't give his own name, you can bet on that, and he ain't visiting this neighborhood for the good of the neighbors. There's a girl in it or my name ain't what it is. Say, I'll tell you what ! The dancing school opens Saturday night, with a swarry. You be down, and I'll do what I can to tell you who's who ?”

Mr. Mitchel thanked him for his offer and tossing him a dollar in payment for his drink, bade him keep the change, which he did, passing the silver coins to his pocket with the dexterity of an expert. Turning to leave the place, Mr. Mitchel was attracted by a picture tacked to the wall. It was a crude lithograph in garish colors, and represented the face of a rather pretty girl. But what most interested him was the fact, that in the picture the girl wore a single blossom of lily of the valley, as a head-dress, while printed below were the words :

“MISS LILIAN VALE, THE LILY OF THE VALLEY.”

“Who is this girl ?” asked Mr. Mitchel, turning again to the bar, and pointing at the lithograph.

"Say ! She 's a peach, she is. The best in the business !" The barkeeper lowered his voice to a confidential whisper. "I 'm stuck on the Lily myself, but there are others, and I guess I ain't in it." He shrugged his shoulders as though expressing resignation at the thought of living without her. "She 's a serio-comic, and does turns in the halls on the Bowery. But she 's too good for that sort, 'cause she 's got a voice like a bird. She ought to be on Broadway, she ought. She could sing right 'long side of Lillian Russell, and it would be a toss up which Lillian got the most applause. I tell you she's a wonder."

"Do you know where she is singing at present ?"

"Well, it's summer now you know, and as she ain't got called to the roof gardens up town yet, I guess she 's out of work. In fact, come to think of it, it 's a long time since she 's sung any place. See the date on that bill ? It 's over a year old. Funny I never thought of that before." He seemed quite taken aback, and lost in thought for a few moments.

"Do you know her personally ?" Mr. Mitchel asked. This aroused him at once.

"Do I ? Well I guess ! Many 's the turn I 've had with her in the mazy waltz, upstairs."

"Then she comes here sometimes ?"

"Oh, yes ! She 's around pretty regular. She 'll be at the opening swarry, sure. You be here, and I 'll give you a knock-down."

Considering her name, and remembering the emblem worked on the baby's slip, Mr. Mitchel promised himself much interest in meeting the young singer, and assured the barkeeper that he would be present at the dance.

He had walked less than a block after leaving Apollo Hall, when a short man, with an eye that never met the gaze of another, suddenly appeared beside him, leaving a doubt as to whence he had come. In a sepulchral whisper the newcomer addressed him.

"I say, Mister! Can I see you a minute?"

"Yes! What do you want?" said Mr. Mitchel. Then thinking that the man must be a beggar, he took out a dime and offered it to him, but the fellow declined it with a grin.

"No, sir," said he. "T'anks awfully, but dat ain't me price. I 'm no beggar."

"Well then, what are you?" asked Mr. Mitchel, sharply.

"I 'm a crook. Just a plain, simple crook. Slippery Sam 's my name, what 's yours?"

The audacity of the man attracted Mr. Mitchel, and looking upon him for a moment as a curiosity, he said:

"You are a crook, eh? Then why might I not hand you over to the police?"

"Time wasted, and nothin' gained. I done my time for my last job, and I 've lived straight ever since. So what could they hold me for, eh?"

"How long have you been out of prison?"

"Two weeks, and I ain't struck no money since I

reached town, straight or crooked. But I seen you give that barkeep' your change, and says I to myself, says I, 'Sam, that man 's your meat.' "

"And what may that elegant expression signify?"

"It signifies that you 've got money to burn, and I want some of it."

"Do you mean to get it by robbery?"

"Not unless you force me into crime," said Slippery Sam, looking at Mr. Mitchel so quizzically that the latter laughed outright.

The fellow was evidently an original character; one of those whose destiny is to see the humorous side of life. Such as he would be the light spirit of a party, whether in club-room or prison cell. Continuing the conversation Mr. Mitchel said:

"I have no wish to make you steal, but how else do you expect to get money from me?"

"In exchange for information," was the quick response.

"What information have you to give?"

"None! My information is for sale."

"Very good. I 'll buy it, if it is worth anything."

"I knew you would. That 's why I followed you. You told the barkeep' that you are a reporter?"

"I did."

"Too thin! Not by no means!"

"How do you know that I am not a reporter?"

"Them diamonds is too white," replied the crook.

Mr. Mitchel blushed, and thought of how he would have geyed Mr. Barnes in such a predicament. That he should have made a claim the falsity of which had been so readily discerned by a member of that class whose intelligence he had always held to be so poor, disturbed his vanity. Evidently it would be necessary to be more alert if he should pursue this investigation. Turning to his companion with more respect, he said :

“Well then, if I am not a reporter, what am I, since you are so smart?”

“No offense, I ’m sure,” was the reply. “I got onto you, that ’s all. I ain’t very fly, but I ain’t such a chump as that barkeep’. Why, he asked if you was a detective, and anybody with half an eye could see you did n’t belong to that set. But you ain’t no reporter neither. I’ll tell you what you are. You ’re a gentleman. One of the real sort. What you ’re up to in this section, is none of my business, only as I can give you tips, in exchange for cash.”

“Yes, but what information have you to impart, which you think I would care to buy?”

“Well, the fact is, I guess if you ’re after anything special I ain’t in it. But I say, if you ’d like to see a sight as would make the old man in Mulberry Street open his eyes, I ’m your guide.”

“Speak more plainly !”

“Say, would you mind turnin’ round and walkin’ the other way? That duck over there, lookin’ so innocent

into that cigar-store, is a detec, in plain clothes. He ain't seen me yet, an' I'd rather he would n't."

"I thought you had done nothing to make you fear the police," said Mr. Mitchel, turning, however, and retracing his steps.

"Neither have I, but then you see, by this time to-morrow I might want to prove I was in Jersey City to-day. You can never tell, and it would be awkward for that chap to swear he'd seen me down here. See? But about this little circus. I s'pose you know, that since the Lexow Committee cleared up things, this town's been run like a Sunday-school. All the gamblin' places shut up tight, with rooms to let, eh? Well, s'pose I could take you to a place where there was just the fanciest kind of a lay-out; faro, poker, roulette, everything. How would that strike you?"

"I would not give ten cents to visit such a place."

"Wait a minute, Mister. There's more. S'pose I was to tell you that the place was run on a steamboat? That we do a moonlight excursion down the bay, to cover up tracks. How then?"

"If your statement is true, it is interesting, of course. But I'm not connected with the police, and the arrest of such people is nothing to me."

"I guess you're straight enough," said the crook in an odd tone, and it dawned upon Mr. Mitchel that the fellow had been sounding him for fear that after all he might be a detective. His replies had been so honestly

made, that even Slippery Sam was satisfied, for in lower tones he added:

“ I did n't think you 'd care for that. But I calculate you 're lookin' into crime as a kind of study. Am I right ? ”

“ You are,” said Mr. Mitchel, admiring the fellow's astuteness.

“ Good ! ” said the crook. “ Then I 've got you. What do you say to attendin' a lecture on crime, to an audience of crooks ? ”

“ And who is to deliver the lecture ? ”

“ Why Preacher Jim, we call him. He 's the longest-headed, smartest, bravest, and squarest crook in New York City.” He spoke with evident admiration. “ I tell you, it makes me feel mean offerin' to sneak you into this lecture, but if I was n't sure you would n't make use of what you 'll see to git some of the boys in quod, I 'd cut my heart out first, or yours.” For a moment he looked vicious enough to carry out his threat upon the spot. But in a moment he had resumed his suave tone, and continued : “ But what 's a man to do when he ain't got a nickle to his name, and he meets a gent as easy to get money out of as you are ? I tell you the temptation 's too much for Slippery Sam.”

Mr. Mitchel laughed heartily at this estimate of himself, and then said :

“ Yes, my man, you have now offered me something for which I am willing to pay liberally. Where is this lecture to be delivered, and when ? ”

"You won't have long to wait, 'cause it's to-night. The place is the steamboat I spoke of. The floatin' gamblin' palace. The B. S. U.'s have chartered the boat for to-night."

"And who are the B. S. U.'s?"

"The Burglars' Social Union. Sounds like a queer society to you, don't it? Well, it's queerer than you think. Oh, you'll have a good time for your money."

"I suppose I shall need some special dress in order not to excite suspicion, shall I not?"

"Not a bit of it. Say, Mister, you never made a bigger mistake in your life. Why, if you was to go masqueradin' in clothes you ain't accustomed to, you'd give yourself away in ten minutes. I tell you the crowd on that boat to-night'll have brains, and you want to keep cool. No, sir, dress natural, and you'll feel natural; and as you'll feel, you'll act. Say! Do you know it's the funniest notion, folks has, them as don't know, I mean, that a thief dresses different from other people? Why should he, now? Tell me that? Why, if he did, would n't everybody be onto him in a second? Well, I guess!"

"Very true! But would it not be best not to wear such expensive clothing? And then my diamonds; they attracted your attention, you know."

"Oh, there'll be just as good clothes there, and just as good diamonds. But then, as you ain't a regular crook—no offense meant—why I guess you'd better leave your best stones at home. There's some men so

mean they 'd rob the dead, much less a brother crook. Of course you 've got to pass for a thief. You don't mind that? "

"No! Not at all," replied Mr. Mitchel, laughing. "And now where shall we meet? "

"Seven sharp. Foot of Jay Street. Good place for a crowd like ours, eh?" He laughed at his own feeble wit, and his hand closed eagerly over a ten-dollar bill which Mr. Mitchel handed to him. "A tenner! Pretty good for a start. T'anks! I knew you was the genuine article, the minute I spotted you. Well, so long! Jay Street! Seven sharp!" and Slippery Sam disappeared into a by-way, so quickly that Mr. Mitchel wondered as he walked on, how the police had ever caught him at all.

CHAPTER V.

THE ETHICS OF HONEST THIEVERY.

PROMPTLY at seven o'clock Mr. Mitchel was at the appointed place, where he waited long enough to begin to doubt that Slippery Sam would keep his tryst, when suddenly that worthy appeared at his side, like a sprite in a pantomime. Evidently he enjoyed the trick of stepping forth from places of concealment, for he chuckled at the surprise which he created, and remarked :

"Excuse me, mister, but I 've got my reputation to keep up, see !"

"Ah, yes, of course," replied Mr. Mitchel, remembering the fellow's name. "Well, you see I have come. Are you still willing to take me to this meeting of your friends ?"

"Why, cert ! What am I here for ? You follow me, and all I 've got to say is, keep your eyes peeled, and your mouth shut, and you won't git into no trouble. By the way, what line are you in ?"

"What line am I in ? Oh ! You mean what sort of crime is my specialty ?"

"You 're fly, Mister. You see, you 've got to be intro-

duced, and we 'd better fix up your trade before we git started, so 's to have no slips."

"Well, then," said Mr. Mitchel, slightly amused at his anomalous position, "as an expert, what would you advise? What sort of a crook do I look most like?"

"That 's the trouble," said Sam, scratching his head by way of assisting thought. "You look so much like the genuine gentleman, it 's hard to place you. Say, I 've got it, by ginger! You 're a bank-note engraver, that 's what you are. Regular trade I mean, but you do an occasional job with the queer, and you 've never been spotted yet, see? That 's why you ain't known out of your own private circle. What 's more, you 've just dropped in to hear the lecture, but you ain't lookin' for no new pals, nor you ain't extendin' your operations into other lines. That 's the ticket. That 's as safe as a string. No inquisitive questions answered, and no new friends desired."

"Very good, but how do I happen to know you?"

"Oh, me? Oh, as to me, that 's simple. One of your pals is up the river for carelessness in changin' a bill. I met him, and he give me a message to you when I come out. I 'm hard up, and you 're stakin' me till I git on easy street. How does that strike you?"

The insidious *naïveté* of the latter part of this answer tickled Mr. Mitchel's fancy, and he laughed aloud, as he replied :

“I say, my man, you ’re an original in your way. Yes, I ’ll stake you for awhile.”

Slippery Sam led the way along the docks, keeping in the shadows from force of habit, rather than from any necessity, since no member of the police force appeared in sight, until presently he darted quickly to the right, disappearing with his customary celerity. Mr. Mitchel awaited his return with patience, and in a few minutes was attracted by a low whistle which seemed to come from beneath him. Looking down, he descried a small boat in the shadow of the dock, manned by two powerful oarsmen, and in the bow stood his late companion beckoning to him. Comprehending that it was meant that he should enter the boat, he climbed down the rotten sides of the dock and dropped, the men, as soon as he was seated, rowing silently and quickly away.

No words were spoken, as they picked their way out into the Hudson, the men avoiding the wash of the great ferry-boats with a skill which indicated that they were experienced watermen. Turning down the river, they rowed for more than a mile between the shores of the two cities, the many lights of which make a beautiful stage picture, and bewilder one unaccustomed to the night view of the shores, so that it would be impossible to locate the spot where they finally stopped and boarded a small excursion steamboat, which itself was moving slowly down the river.

Slippery Sam stood up and threw a rope to a man

standing near the rail of the steamboat, and they were hauled up close alongside. Mr. Mitchel and Sam were helped aboard, and the boat which had brought them dropped astern. A few minutes later, the speed of the steamboat was greatly accelerated, indicating that no more passengers were expected, and within an hour she had passed out between the great guns of the two forts which guard the Narrows, and was riding lazily on the ocean highway between Sandy Hook and Coney Island.

The *Siren* was one of the many small steam vessels licensed to take excursionists from the metropolis to the many resorts within two hours' sail of the Battery. The captain and owner, being himself a member of the sporting fraternity, had scented a good thing for himself when the sudden activity of the police, due to legislative investigation, had resulted in the closing of the city gambling rooms. He had therefore summoned a few of the professional gamblers, and quickly interested them in his venture. They were to "run the games" while he "would run the boat," as one of the men tersely put it.

To this end the forward cabin had been elaborately fitted up with the necessary implements, all of which, however, were of the portable order, in case of emergency. There were two faro dealers, two roulette wheels, and a number of tables for poker. As the boat already enjoyed the advantages of a bar license, liquor could be had on demand. There were many electric lights, but the windows were closely curtained, lest too

much of an illumination should attract the suspicion of the harbor police.

Interference however, was scarcely probable, for the captain had cunningly devised a plan whereby the nefarious traffic was concealed. He had early in the season abandoned all regular trips, and advertised his boat to hire for private excursion parties. And so careful was he, that in furtherance of this scheme he nominally entertained a different "society" or "club" each night, and admittance was strictly by ticket. By this means it was very difficult for any but the "elect" to get aboard, as the disposition of the "tickets" was solely in the charge of a chosen and trustworthy few.

On this occasion there was really a private excursion party on the *Siren*. The Burglars' Social Union had chartered the boat, paying a round sum for the privilege of holding a meeting beyond the prying eyes of the police, a part of the agreement being that the gamblers might run their games as usual, the members of the B. S. U., however, being the only players. It was because of the suspicious characters of these gentlemen, that the captain had preferred to pick them up in small parties, as he slowly worked his way down the river, rather than to allow so many "crooks" to get aboard from one dock, where a stray policeman might recognize too many of them.

When Mr. Mitchel ascended the stairway which led to the saloon, and stood for a moment looking about him,

he was a little surprised at the prospect. The faro and roulette games were well patronized, and several games of poker were in progress. Yet the quiet, gentlemanly behavior of all in the place, made it difficult to believe that he was in the presence of the principal criminals out of prison. His entrance attracted scarcely any attention. Two or three turned and looked at him, but failing to recognize him, reverted to their games.

"Quite a family party, ain't it?" said Slippery Sam, in lowered tones.

"A most extraordinary group, I should say," responded Mr. Mitchel, "provided these men are really criminals."

"Well, we like the word 'crooks' better," said Sam, suggestively, "and if you don't mind, I'd rather you'd use it."

"Why certainly, if you desire it," said Mr. Mitchel. "But what is the difference?"

This seemed to be a poser for Sam, who shifted uneasily a moment, searching for a satisfactory reply, which finally shaped itself thus:

"Well, you see, I ain't no scholar, so I ain't good at definitions. I've spent so much time in jail, and the prison library as a rule is so meagre, that I might say my education's been neglected. But there's a point of difference that has weight here to-night, and that I can tell you. You see 'criminals' is what the Judges calls us, and 'crooks' is what we calls ourselves. Are you on?"

“Not fully. Make it plainer?”

“Why, don’t you see? If one of this crowd heard you talking about ‘criminals’ he’d twig you in a minute. He’d know you was n’t a ‘crook’ yourself, and that’d be bad.”

“Ah! Yes, of course. Evidently the less I have to say, the less likely I will be to get into trouble by making mistakes.”

“Yes, but don’t talk too little neither. If you’re too still, they’ll be on to you just as quick as if you open your trap too wide. But you was askin’ if these men are all crooks? Yes, sir, and a more skilfuller crowd, in their way, don’t exist. Now there’s a man over there by the roulette, the chap with the long-tailed coat, and the choker. Size him up and what do you make his total?”

“Do you mean, what position in life would I accord to him? Well, that is not an easy problem at any time, and under present circumstances it becomes doubly difficult. Yet I must confess that he seems strangely out of place here, for do you know, it may make you laugh to hear it, but I should take him for a Salvation Army man.”

“Say, Mister, you’re a bird, you are. A regular eagle for seeing into things. Looks like Salvation Army, does he? Well, that’s precisely his lay. You ought to hear him leadin’ a meeting, and takin’ lambs into the fold. Oh, dear, but he’s saved more souls than we’ve got fingers and toes. But then, for all that, he’s got another

business on the side. Give a guess at that? What would you say was his regular profession now? How does he live?"

"Judging by his earnestness at present, he might be a card sharp," ventured Mr. Mitchel.

"Sharp? You're right enough when you speak that word. But not cards! No, sir! He never touches 'em. He's just amusin' himself at that wheel, but he'll leave it pretty soon. No, sir! He's a fence, and the best known in the city, and never been even suspected by the police, much less arrested. Oh, yes! He's sharp. Well, I guess."

In this strain Sam rambled on, pointing out the various prominent criminals in the apartment, and giving graphic details of their careers, so that Mr. Mitchel was enjoying himself hugely, and at the same time obtaining quite an insight into the habits of a class which had always interested him, to wit the uncaptured criminals. Surely, among these, were those with the greater share of brains?

But the more he saw and heard of the men around him, the more impatient he grew to see Preacher Jim, the man who had announced that he would lecture to criminals, upon crime.

The *Siren* had passed far beyond the lights of the city, and Coney Island's thousands of electric lamps made but a bright streak on the horizon, when at last there was a movement which promised the fulfilment of

his desire. The card tables were taken away by attendants, who seemed to have been drilled to the task, so rapidly did they accomplish it. Camp stools were arranged in rows, and the company found places facing one table which had been left at the farther end of the saloon.

In the inevitable confusion attendant upon this scramble for seats, orderly though it was, Mr. Mitchel was separated from Sam for a moment. Just then someone whispered near his ear :

“If you should need help I ’ll be on hand.”

Mr. Mitchel turned swiftly but could not be sure of the identity of the speaker. The person nearest to him was one of the waiters, hurrying by with a tray full of empty glasses, while at a little distance back was a man who appeared to be watching him intently. Either of these might have spoken the whispered words, but which? Mr. Mitchel reasoned that it must be this one who was still eying him closely, yet he could not dismiss the idea that the voice though disguised was familiar to his ear.

“I wonder if Mr. Barnes is aboard,” he thought, and this suspicion for a few moments occupied him so thoroughly, that he forgot about the other man, until aroused by Sam who had regained his side, bringing two choice stools, with backs to them.

“There he is,” said that worthy, with suppressed excitement.

"There is who?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"Why Preacher Jim, of course," said Sam. "See! He's takin' his place behind the table. He's goin' to begin at once. Listen!"

Mr. Mitchel looked towards the opposite end of the room, and in Preacher Jim he recognized the man who had been watching him but a few moments before. Had he uttered the mysterious message?

A hush fell over the company as the man stood behind the table, and gazed about him for several minutes in silence, affording Mr. Mitchel an excellent opportunity to scrutinize the general appearance. Here was one who might have baffled those students who have formulated a physical "type" of criminals. He was a type of nothing, unless of perfect manhood. Of medium stature his symmetrical frame seemed fashioned in the mould which would yield the greatest strength and endurance. A finely formed head, with great brain room, marvellously well balanced between his powerful shoulders, assured you of his masterful will power. No wonder that before such a man as this, all the other crooks stood in awed admiration. Their silence, and their attitudes of eager attention, were a tacit admission of the fact that they were in the presence of recognized superiority. They bowed before their master.

"Has this man ever been in prison?" inquired Mr. Mitchel in a whisper.

"In prison? They 'd have to catch him first, would n't they?" was Sam's scornful reply.

But now Preacher Jim began to speak.

"My friends," said he, in a mellow voice of singular magnetic quality, "I have the pleasure of addressing you once more, after a lapse of many months. I see around me the familiar faces of a number of friends, but I note others who are unknown to me. By way of introduction therefore, I may speak of myself, giving a brief sketch of my past history.

"I am known to you all as Jim, and because of my fondness for speech-making, some call me Preacher Jim. Yet preacher though I am, I am not one of the learned doctors of divinity, nor have I much in common with them, save the earnestness with which I follow the path which I have marked out for myself in this life.

"I was born about thirty years ago. In this matter, from the universal laws of Nature which control us all, I was not consulted. I was brought into this world, being myself in no way responsible either for my coming, or for the manner thereof. As trite and unnecessary a statement as this may seem to be, it has an important bearing upon what I may call my theme for to-night. Being born, someone decided that I should be known by the name of James, which has been abbreviated into Jim. This name was given to me in much the same manner, and for the same purpose as a name is given to a dog; that I might come when called, and be distinguished

from others of my kind. And so I came to be Jim. Other name I have not, because my revered father overlooked the formality of marriage with my mother. Later he overlooked both my mother and myself, and we were left to drift on the tide of humanity, and it is a truth which is strange in the presence of the vaunted civilization of this era, that such flotsam will ever be finally stranded on the barren shores of damnation.

“At the age of five I began to steal, not from necessity, but from imitation. I lived among thieves, and did as they did. At ten I was one of the most skilful pick-pockets along the Bowery, and at twelve I was at the head of a band of twenty boys, any one of whom was a past master in the art of breaking the eighth commandment. One of these, emboldened by success, attempted an operation beyond his power of accomplishment, and was detected in the act. He fled, and was followed. With a lack of comradeship, for which he has since been punished, he ran into my place, and depositing some of his plunder under my bed, succeeded in evading the officer who had followed him in. I was awakened from what the policeman declared was a sham sleep, and taken to the station-house, whence in due time I was sent to a reformatory.

“There I remained until I was of age, and during those seven years, I received a double education. From the good and pious preacher who officiated in the chapel, I first suspected the value of knowledge, and

then obtained the books from which to acquire it. Being my own teacher to a great extent, and interested in my pupil, I absorbed knowledge as a sponge does water. But on the other hand, from the vast variety of delinquents who were sent to the institution from time to time, I also learned the true meaning of the words vice and crime.

"I entered the reformatory a little thief, whose main object in stealing had been mischief. I left the place a professional crook endowed with such knowledge as made me self-reliant. I felt myself equipped for the battle with the world to such a degree, that I was ready to attack it, rather than wait and defend myself, and I was eager for the fray.

"Nine years have passed, and I have lived, if not above suspicion at least beyond conviction. I have never been in prison, and I never expect to be. Yet I am a professional criminal.

"Having given you this short sketch of myself, I pass to the consideration of the criminal in general. My friends, we call ourselves 'crooks,' and the world calls us criminals. As crooks we understand and sympathize with one another. As criminals, does the world understand or sympathize with us? Does the Christian, with his creed, 'Love thine enemies,' love us? Yet are we not counted as the enemies of Society?

"Let us consider for a moment the true relation between the criminal and Society at large. There seems

to be but one doctrine of salvation for the delinquent, and that is punishment. Granting that this theory is a correct one, is it justly practised? We find that for a given offense there is a specified number of years in prison, set down as the proper punishment. Are all men who commit this crime equally amenable to punishment, that all should be treated with equal severity? Are all of these guilty persons equally responsible for their acts? Have all had the same heritage, the same environment, the same examples of conduct, and the same opportunities for living without resorting to crime? The answer is so evident that it is amazing that civilization should tolerate such blindness in the Goddess of Justice."

He paused a moment, having delivered the final sentences with such earnest and intense force, that his audience was carried away by his eloquence and applauded rapturously. Mr. Mitchel was astounded to find a man of this mental calibre, openly admitting that he lived a life of crime. He was more interested than he had ever before been in any man, and was impatient to hear more.

"My friends, Society has made one egregious, irreparable blunder. And it has fallen into this error from sheer selfishness. The mistake lies in this; the criminal has been measured by the standards applicable to normal men, whereas crime ever has been and ever will be, the result of abnormal development, or of physical and

psychical degeneration. To use a trite simile, 'crime is a disease,' and as in other diseases the sufferer is personally responsible for his condition in only a small proportion of cases.

"How differently does Society treat physical and moral disease? For the afflicted of the first class we have colleges, physicians, nurseries, sanatariums, hospitals, and lazarettos. For the latter we have lawyers, juries, judges, prisons, stripes, and hanging.

"In the worst stages of physical disease, the individual becomes a menace and a danger to the community. With perfect, but nevertheless selfish justice, the afflicted one is seized and incarcerated in a lazaretto. Such a fate is sad enough, and bad enough, yet it is vastly different from the extreme example of the morally diseased. He endangers the life, or takes the life, of one of the community, and his life is taken in payment. Thus Society as a whole, commits the very act for which it dooms the poor wretch. If it be argued that Society kills, but does not murder, the contention is easily shown to be sophistry. For if a man should kill a convicted and condemned murderer, thus committing the act which Society has elected itself to commit, such a man would still be adjudged guilty of murder. Yet if all the facts were considered, including the most important one that all morally diseased are also physically imperfect, and that the two afflictions are interdependent, the world would be aroused to the recognition of its great error,

and Society would be compelled to admit that it should no more slay the moral than the physical leper. The day will, the day must come, when crime, like disease, will be treated curatively, rather than punitively. But that day is not yet, and we live in the present, and must meet conditions as they are. How then shall we criminals, we 'crooks' fashion our lives?

"I have pointed out to you the great error made by Society, but, my friends, we ourselves have fallen into the same mistake, and it is of more importance to us than to Society. We also overlook the fact that our criminal propensities are born and bred in us; that we are not solely responsible for what we are; that we are morally, and oftentimes physically diseased, and that we are congenitally so. Yet such is our deplorable condition. Moreover, no helping hand is outstretched towards us. The hand that beckons holds a scourge, and the index finger points the way to prison. The world will not help us. We must help ourselves. How?

"Why not by co-operation, as in this Society? Thus we erect a community in sympathy with our position and condition, and by learning to live in true harmony with all the members of this smaller, diseased community, we cannot but progress, in ourselves, and in our progeny, towards a right to claim a place in that wider world, which holds us now as enemies; enemies without claim on Christian love.

"In physical disease, the most important step towards

cure has been made when the presence of the disturbance is recognized, and correctly diagnosticated. So it must be with crime. Once the individual 'crook' realizes his true condition, and the danger he is in because of the unequal warfare which he wages with the world, then, surely, he is better armed for the fray.

"To make an end of my preaching then, I will advise the individual, as I have advised the whole Society present. Let each man, as I have done, study out his own heritage. Let him analyze his birth and birthright, and weigh the necessity of his leading a criminal life. Some will find the heritage so slight, that it will be not difficult to effect a cure in themselves, and to live honestly. These owe it to themselves, to Society at large, but more particularly to their children, to strive towards that end.

"The other extreme will be the man whose heritage and whose youthful associations have been such, that crime is inevitable. He is the moral leper. Let him remember that not the lazaretto, but the hangman will be his fate, if Society should discover his condition.

"There is a law, however, that every man has the inherent right of self-preservation. The rule applies to the moral leper as well as to the spotless virgin. The right being his, let him obtain the means. Let him first acquire knowledge; the wisdom of the world; the learning of books; and above all, the knowledge of himself. Let him beware how he commits a crime. If he

must defy the law, and it will be inevitable that he must, let him plot and plan, be patient and cautious, cunning and wary, so that having yielded to the impulse of crime when he can no longer resist, he may yet defy detection and that punishment which blind Justice will mete out to him. Let him, in short, live as I live ; a criminal by force of heritage and diseased moral centres ; a born criminal ; yet committing crime so seldom, so carefully, and so cunningly, that he may escape not alone punishment, but even suspicion. Above all things, let him obey the one greatest duty of his being. Let him not become the father of other criminals. Let his vice die with him. And may God pity such men, as men do not."

He ceased, and there was profound silence. There was no applause, yet it was evident that those present were much moved. They wore thoughtful countenances, and seemed oblivious of their companions, as though all were preoccupied with introspective speculations.

Mr. Mitchel himself was deeply stirred. He had never met, nor heard of, such a man as this. A born criminal, he called himself, yet from all outward appearances a man of culture and refinement. He was a paradox. If he was truly the terrible criminal that he described himself to be, how wonderfully well he had benefited by the advice he had just given to others. He had truly acquired knowledge of the world and of himself, and in his great battle with the world he had

armed himself with the best weapons with which to defend himself against suspicion.

Yet, if a criminal, guilty of crimes yet unsuspected, what a problem to discover in what he had offended. On the other hand, if his pretense of criminality was merely assumed ; if his association with the prison chaplain had made him in some sort a fanatical crank, who preached for the love of preaching, and went among criminals because it pleased his fancy to fool them into believing him to be one of themselves, then how skilfully he played his part, and how well he deluded these men, all of whom undoubtedly would have scoffed at the idea that any man could dupe them.

From either point of view, Mr. Mitchel thought that Preacher Jim would be a most interesting study, when he noticed that the man was apparently coming towards himself. He was very much astonished, however, when presently Preacher Jim stood before him, and, extending his hand cordially, remarked quietly :

“ Well, Mr. Mitchel, how did you enjoy the lecture ? ”

CHAPTER VI.

SET A THIEF TO CATCH A THIEF.

MR. MITCHEL quickly decided that it would be absurd to attempt to deny his identity. This was no ordinary man, and he had called him by his proper name with a confidence born of certainty. He thought it best even to conceal his surprise, and therefore, as though conversing with an old acquaintance, he answered quietly :

“I cannot recall ever having enjoyed a lecture so much. You have a wonderful grasp of your subject, and marked ability in presenting it intelligibly. Indeed, I am in your debt.”

Mr. Mitchel was a man of great self-control, and had that mastery of manner which made it possible for him entirely to subdue his emotions, and to conceal his thoughts when he so desired. It was therefore Preacher Jim who was now astonished, and he did not hide his feelings so well. He had prepared his little *coup*, with much anticipatory satisfaction. He had hoped to see Mr. Mitchel start in alarm on learning that his identity was known ; alarm that it should be known among such company, and in such a place. He was therefore

piqued at the *nonchalant* reply, and, for a moment, lost his own customary self-possession.

“You do not seem surprised at my knowing you !” he exclaimed irritably, and in almost a threatening tone.

“I meet so many people, and am so very poor at recalling faces,” said Mr. Mitchel suavely, “that when one addresses me by name I take it as a matter of course that we have met before, even though the fact may have escaped my own memory. And this has happened to me so many times that it seldom surprises me.”

“But we have never met before,” said Preacher Jim, still in ominous tones.

“Indeed ?”

“Indeed !”

Mr. Mitchel made no further remark, but merely gazed intently into his companion's face, and awaited his next words. The criminal, finding himself thus compelled to speak again, paused, reflecting how to proceed. Thus, during a few critical moments, the two men stood face to face in silence.

It was possible for this man to turn to his friends and announce that a spy was among them, and Mr. Mitchel's career of usefulness might thus be ended. He appreciated fully the danger of his position, but he was one of those men who are calmest in such supreme crises, and it was this entire absence of fear which must have appealed to the other man, himself afraid of nothing living. Presently, with an altered accent which showed that all

antagonism had been laid aside for the time being, Preacher Jim extended his hand and said :

“ Mr. Mitchel, I am pleased to make your acquaintance, and glad that you have come here to-night.”

Mr. Mitchel took the proffered hand and shook it cordially as he replied :

“ I am equally pleased to know you, and to be here.”

“ I wish to talk with you. Will you come with me, where we will not be disturbed, and have a chat and a cigar ? ”

Preacher Jim led the way, and Mr. Mitchel followed, until they entered a small private cabin, in which was a table and a few chairs. The two men sat opposite each other, and the criminal summoned a waiter and ordered a bottle of wine. Then he began by saying :

“ Mr. Mitchel, in spite of your well feigned calmness, confess that you did not expect me to call you by your name ? ”

“ I certainly was astonished, but you will admit that it would not have been wise to allow you to see that too plainly.”

“ It would have been very unwise. I was in a bad humor, and there are times, as you may judge by my lecture, when I might commit acts not strictly in accord with the laws of our country.”

“ You mean that you might have done me an injury ? I realized that, and acted in the manner which seemed best calculated to prevent any trouble.”

"Again I say you are a wise man ; you are more than that ; you are a brave one, for only courage could have carried you safely through. Now that my anger has passed, I am harmless, I assure you."

"Perhaps then you would be willing to enlighten me as to how you chanced to know my name ?"

Mr. Mitchel, quick to read character, thought that he had detected a large share of vanity in this man, and he hoped to molify him further by affording him an opportunity to boast a little. In this he was entirely successful, for the reply came with a touch of eagerness.

"Ah !" said Preacher Jim, "you should have thought twice before trying to steal a march on me. Do you suppose that I could have evaded the law officers, and the laws, as successfully as I have, if the two eyes in my head were both half blind, as in the case of ninety per cent of men ? No, sir. I have hundreds of eyes keeping watch. I knew that you were coming here to-night, long before you came, and had I chosen to prevent it, you could never have boarded this boat. But I considered the matter and decided to allow you to hear my lecture."

"Again I find that I am in your debt !"

"But you wish to learn how I knew this. To explain thoroughly I must tell you something more of our organization. We 'crooks,' as the boys call themselves, are banded together for mutual protection. We are at eternal warfare with the police force. We are constantly

spied upon by detectives. So much of course you know. We have therefore arranged a more or less perfect system of defense. When one of our members sees a detective, it becomes his business to spy upon that spy, and report to officers of our society. In this way we often obtain valuable information, which frequently makes it possible for us to aid in the escape of the special prey for which the detective might be searching. Now you will remember that when you were talking with Slippery Sam this morning, that cunning young man recognized a detective and led you off in another direction. Very good ! But it so chanced that another of our members was in the neighborhood, and he also saw the detective, and at once began to shadow him. Can you guess what business called that detective into the neighborhood of Apollo Hall this morning ? ”

“ No ! ”

“ Yet he is employed by your friend Mr. Barnes.” Preacher Jim chuckled as Mr. Mitchel this time manifested his surprise, when by way of response he asked quickly :

“ Do you mean that Mr. Barnes set a spy upon me ? ”

“ Just so ! Friendly, was n’t it ? ”

“ But with what object ? ”

Mr. Mitchel felt assured that he could answer his own question, but he wished to learn how much this man knew, or suspected. His object was not attained, for the answer was :

“Ah ! That ’s no affair of mine. You are not one of our members and therefore our man would not have pursued the matter further, had you not been in company with Slippery Sam.”

“And why because of that fact?”

“It is always important to know whether there be amongst us any who would betray a friend for ready cash. You comprehend? So in this instance, Mr. Barnes’s man, who is a clever fellow, seeing that Slippery Sam had suspicions, kept in the background until you were around the corner, and then he began to shadow you most scientifically. But our man is skilful also, and he easily kept the whole party in sight, until you parted with Sam. Then he tracked you to your home and obtained much information about you, all of which in due time reached me. It was not difficult to discover that Sam meant to bring you with him, and so we were forewarned.”

“You do not mean that you could get that information from Sam himself? He seems too shrewd.”

“He is sharp, but our system was too much for him. It was very easy, as you will perceive. He could not bring you with him without obtaining a pass for two. In applying for it, he was obliged to give a full account of the person whom he wished to introduce. He did so, and with the information which we already had, it was not difficult to take the true measurement of his imaginary ‘crook,’ who worked at ‘engraving bank-notes’ and

who 'did not desire any new acquaintances.' It was really quite amusing to hear him expatiating upon the wonderful talents of his new-found friend, who was 'staking him for the present.'"

Preacher Jim imitated Slippery Sam so well that Mr. Mitchel laughed heartily. Then he asked :

"But why did you allow me to come on board?"

"I will tell you candidly. I had as much curiosity to learn your object in coming amongst us, as you possibly had, in seeing me and my friends. Why did you come?"

"I will be equally frank with you. I had no special object. The proposal was made by Sam, and it seemed to be attractive. I therefore accepted. I have always taken an interest in the so-called criminal class, and would not miss the chance of seeing them, when free from restraint."

"Then you came merely as one goes to the Park to see the wild animals?"

"With absolutely no other definite purpose."

There was a pause, during which it was evident to Mr. Mitchel, that his companion was still somewhat in doubt as to the wisdom of trusting him, and of this he was assured by the next question, which was asked suddenly, that he might be taken off his guard, or at least have no chance for preparing an untruthful reply.

"Why was that detective spying upon you?" asked Preacher Jim. Mr. Mitchel realized that it would be necessary to answer unhesitatingly, but he was accus-

tomed to determine upon a line of conduct quickly, and now he decided upon a bold and possibly hazardous course.

"I have no objection to telling you what I think of that," said he, "though of course I may be wrong. Mr. Barnes is working upon a mysterious case, and has asked me to assist him. He values my assistance in an investigation, but at the same time he dislikes to admit that I could accomplish what would baffle him. I imagine that in this instance he has sent a man after me that I may not make discoveries which would be unknown to him. Thus he would hope to keep pace with me in any advance that I might make."

"If he is as clever a detective as his reputation declares him to be, he should be above such methods. Were I a detective I would use my brains, and not rely upon this petty system of spies."

This was even better than Mr. Mitchel had hoped for, and he hastened now to lead the conversation into the channel which he had chosen to enter.

"I concur with you heartily, and I think your opinion upon a crime would be most interesting. I wonder if I would be going too far were I to ask you to discuss the one in question?"

"You may do so if you wish. It will depend upon what crime it is, and how much I may really know about it, whether I would care to talk it over with you. You must not forget that I am a crook, and that I am ac-

quainted with the greatest criminals in this country. Any one of my friends might be the guilty man in this instance. Indeed, I might be the criminal myself."

"Even in a case of murder?" asked Mr. Mitchel, quickly, eying his companion closely.

"Why not?" was the calm reply. "It is natural for you to suppose that the degree of the crime matters, but with the born criminal, such as I am, there are no degrees, no limits except those created by the exigencies of circumstances. For example, I might decide to steal a pocket handkerchief, and a chain of events might ensue which would lead to the necessity of killing a man. That would not, nay could not, make me pause. It would be just as natural, and just as unavoidable with my heritage and character, as that one congenitally phthisical should take a slight cold which would lead to a cough, and thence to consumption and possibly to death. You see even the final event, death, is the same in each."

Mr. Mitchel had asked his question hoping to see this man show some sign of emotion, which would indicate whether or not one of his secret and unsuspected crimes, might be the killing of a fellow being; for already he had grown so interested in this criminal that the discovery of one of his unlawful acts would seem of more consequence, than the unravelling of the Mora murder. Now he found that the man was so deeply in earnest in his theories of crime, that he could not be surprised into

showing any emotions which would inculcate himself. Nevertheless, he still thought that the conversation could be continued to advantage along the lines which he was following, and so proceeded :

“Of course I have no wish to induce you to betray either your friends or yourself ; and it is scarcely possible that you have any connection with the Mora murder, which is the case in which I am interested.”

“Ah, yes ! You mean the rich man, who was killed with one of his own weapons ? I have not the slightest objection to giving you my views on that subject. Ask me what you please.”

“I hardly know where to begin. It just occurred to me that it is a crime the details of which had been skilfully managed, and that as you are not only a criminal, for which assertion I have only your own authority, but also a student of criminology, your opinion would be interesting to me. Therefore I ventured to ask for it. You might tell me, to begin with, whether you would look for the murderer among the so-called criminal class, or elsewhere ?”

“Ah, but you forget, that even though the man who has done this has never before been detected in crime, this act places him at once among what you term the criminal class. You could not seek a murderer elsewhere.”

“You seem to be evading my question,” said Mr. Mitchel boldly. “I will put it more plainly. Would

you look for a man who has been guilty of other crimes ; or would you say that this is an initial crime, the act of a man who has never sinned before ? ”

“ Unquestionably the guilty man was far from innocent of other crimes. It was deliberately planned, and studiously executed. Only a murder committed in the heat of passion, could be a first offense. A premeditated killing proves the guilty party to be a regular criminal, though of course it does not follow that he has been previously recognized as such.”

“ Then you do not believe that the son is guilty ? ” asked Mr. Mitchel.

“ What I believe on that score must have little weight, because I do not know the accused. He is not known to be a criminal, therefore the presumption is in his favor. If he has never committed a crime before I would stake my life on his innocence. But if he has, then it is possible that he is the man. I only say it is possible.”

“ There seem to be many facts which point to his guilt. For example, the weapon used was part of a collection owned by the deceased. The son of course knew where to obtain it.”

“ That would be very poor evidence upon which to hang a man. What need had the murderer to know where the bludgeon was usually kept, since the old man had taken it to bed with him ? ”

Mr. Mitchel started at hearing this. The words gave him a new and important idea. He remembered Mr.

Barnes's argument that the murdered man had not taken the weapon from the cabinet himself, as the door was found open. Preacher Jim advanced just the contrary view, and Mr. Mitchel determined to probe deeper, in order to learn his reasons for his opinion.

"Ah, of course," said he, with no outward exhibition of the increased interest which he felt. "If Mr. Mora took the weapon upstairs any man might have found and used it. But the old man was very methodical, and I am assured that if he had done as you suggest, he would again have locked the cabinet door, which, on the contrary, was found open in the morning, as though the weapon had been abstracted hurriedly, by someone laboring under excitement. Does not this conflict with your idea?"

"Why, not at all. You are probably repeating to me one of the arguments of your friend Mr. Barnes, which only shows how detectives always work to substantiate a theory, instead of allowing an investigation to lead where it will. Of course it is all guess-work, about the movements of the man who was killed. But my solution of the mystery is, that he expected trouble that night, and in that case, anticipating the approach of an enemy, he would have been sufficiently disturbed to have forgotten to lock the door of the cabinet again."

"I could readily agree with that, if I could see any reason for thinking that he was expecting a disagreeable visitor. What evidence have you of that?"

"Oh, very good, I think. In one of the newspaper accounts I read that the watchman, in his statement said that he saw young Mora enter the house, because he had been warned by his master to be doubly watchful. In fact, he had asked permission to take the night for himself, sending a substitute in his place, but his request was refused; and then it was that he was cautioned to be doubly on his guard."

"That is very significant, and quite new to me. I wonder that Mr. Barnes omitted it from his report of the facts."

"Oh, you can't expect a detective to think of every thing you know."

Here Preacher Jim laughed heartily, while Mr. Mitchel eyed him thoughtfully, wondering at his apparent unconcern, and his seemingly genuine good-humor. The man's manner did not agree with a half-formulated idea which Mr. Mitchel was mentally considering, and therefore he carefully selected his words in continuing the conversation.

"Then if this watchman was so wide awake," said Mr. Mitchel, "surely it must count against young Mora, when he swears that he saw him enter and leave the house at about the time of the murder?"

"Oh, no! The watchman only swears that a plaid suit of clothes went in and came out again. From that he concludes that he saw young Mora, but he might be mistaken."

"Oh, then you do not accept Mora's theory that the murderer put on the plaid suit in the house, after committing the crime?"

"No, I do not. None but stupid officials would have accepted that trumped-up story. Why, how can you say that the watchman was correct in identifying the clothing of the man when he came out of the house, and dismiss his equally positive assertion as to what he saw going in? Mark my word, the watchman is both truthful and accurate. That plaid suit went in, and came out again."

"And the man who wore it killed old man Mora?"

"Beyond all question of doubt."

"Then the discovery of that suit of clothes, should be the first care of the police."

"It should, but the police will never find it. Someone else may, and probably will. Do not forget that the police are often credited with more than they deserve. The publication of all the facts, places all people on the scent. The guilty party is somewhere, and necessarily comes into contact with persons, any one of whom may read his fear in his face, and report it to the police. So those clothes are hidden, and at any moment they may reach the Central Office, because someone finds them, and thinks it is his duty to take them to headquarters. After that, it ought to be plain sailing."

"Why should not the murderer have burned the clothing? Or at least have destroyed them in some way?"

"Perhaps he has, but it is often risky. The smell of burnt cloth will rouse a whole tenement-house full of people. Ashes found, may excite suspicion, perhaps more so than the clothing itself, especially if the murderer was disguised. On the whole, and judging by what I should have done myself, I conclude that the plaid suit is still in existence. Another man though might act differently. When theorizing about human actions we are all apt to measure them by our personal standards."

"And you say that if you had killed Mr. Mora, having worn these clothes as a disguise, you would not have destroyed them afterwards?"

"I think not. Of course circumstances alter cases, and it might be that having actually killed the man, my views would be altered. It is so easy to theorize, eh, Mr. Mitchel?"

"Yes, yes! You are right," said Mr. Mitchel, abstractedly, and then he paused a moment, presently continuing: "There is another point which tells against young Mora. The theft of the will. It makes him nine millions richer, and would be valueless to any other man."

"Would it?" asked Preacher Jim.

Something in his intonation attracted Mr. Mitchel, and he quickly asked:

"Can you imagine any use another man might make of it?"

"I can."

"Will you tell me?"

"Mr. Mitchel, if I refuse, you might be insane enough to think that I know more than I care to disclose. That I am endeavoring to shield someone, and you might even get it into your head that that person is myself. Therefore I will reply to your question, although I think it should not have been asked. It compels me to show you how much more useful property is to the criminal, than to the rest of the world."

"Oh, pardon me. It was understood that I should not insist upon going any further than you choose. You need not answer, if you prefer not."

"No! I can understand that it would interest you to hear my opinion, and I will give it. This will leaves half of the fortune to charity. By its suppression the son inherits all. Now, let us imagine that an enterprising crook, with a long head, conceives the plan of stealing the will and of killing Mr. Mora, so that the will should acquire immediate value. Can't you see now how that document might be useful to the thief?"

"I would prefer not to guess, but to have you tell me."

"Very good. Young Mora inherits. Then the crook turns up some fine night with a copy of the will, which he might claim to have found in an ash-barrel. He might ask what Mr. Mora would give for the continued suppression of the will? How much per year, let us say. Would it not be fair, in exchange for the nine millions, for the heir to pay over to the crook at least the annual

interest? At even one per cent that would be \$90,000. Don't you think that a document which would yield that sum per year would be worth the stealing?"

"By heavens, you are right. But it would require a man of brains and courage to concoct and carry out such a scheme."

"There are several such men on this boat."

"You mean that the murderer of Mr. Mora may be on this boat?"

"He may be, of course. Stranger things have happened, one of which is your own presence here, as well as that of the man who promised to help you if you should need aid."

"Ah! You heard that?"

"I did!"

"Then perhaps you recognized the man?"

"I did!"

"Who was he?"

"I think you must excuse my not answering you this time. I prefer to let you discover for yourself. I never spoil sport."

"Oh, very well! As you will! And now, since you have been so kind as to discuss one crime with me, there is another, in which I am even more deeply interested. Perhaps you might express your views upon that."

"Again I say it depends upon what crime it is, and how much I may know."

"I am alluding to the child who was found in the graveyard."

"Yes! What of that?"

"I believe that I have obtained a clue which will unravel that mystery. I think I shall soon know who the child's mother is, though it was not she who placed the infant in the cemetery."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes! It was a man, and probably the father. Now I would like to ask you——"

"You must excuse me. I prefer not to discuss it. In fact, I have talked with you too much already. Good night."

With this abrupt speech, Preacher Jim suddenly left the room. Mr. Mitchel looked after him a moment, with a smile of satisfaction, and then went on deck whistling softly.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PLAID SUIT OF CLOTHES.

MR. MITCHEL reached his home that night in safety, his presence on the boat having apparently escaped the notice of any of the crooks.

On the following morning, precisely at the hour appointed, Mr. Barnes was announced, and ushered in.

"Ah! Good morning, Mr. Barnes," said Mr. Mitchel. "I hope you have not overworked yourself on this case of yours. Feeling well this morning?"

"Quite well, I thank you," was the rejoinder. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I did not know but that you had been up all night watching somebody. Mr. Barnes, I have often admired the patience of detectives, when I have read of one of them sitting all night watching a doorway, through which he had seen a criminal pass. The fact that the criminal seldom comes out again, does not seem to deter him at all. He watches on, and hopes for the best. Some day a criminal may come back and be caught. Who knows? That sort of thing always makes me think of our cat. Remus is his name, and he is truly a wonderful fellow, in many ways. Only, he has that inevi-

table failing of his kind. He must watch something. I suppose he feels it a sort of duty in repayment for his food and lodging. The first night on which he came to us, he caught a mouse, and while he was playing with it, the little creature escaped and ran into my wife's slipper, from which hiding-place master Remus soon dislodged him. But do you know, whenever that cat sees that slipper lying about, he sits down and watches it. It is really very amusing. Come up some night when my wife is at home, and I will have Remus go through his performance for you. It might prove a useful object lesson."

"I have listened patiently to your chaffing, Mr. Mitchel," said Mr. Barnes, with becoming dignity, "and I should be pleased to have you tell me why you have spoken thus. What have I done to deserve it?"

"You had me spied upon!" answered Mr. Mitchel, sharply.

"You are mistaken," said Mr. Barnes, quietly.

"Do you mean to deny that one of your men followed me about yesterday?"

"No! But it was not at my instigation."

"Then why was it done?"

"He knew you, and seeing you in the company of one of the shrewdest bunco men in town, he thought it best to keep you both in sight."

"Dear me! So your man thought that Leroy Mitchel is not capable of protecting himself in New York City!

We will let that pass then. But now tell me why you followed me personally last night?"

"How do you know that I did?"

"That is not answering my question."

"Well, Mr. Mitchel, while I certainly think you capable of taking care of yourself, from what my man told me, I concluded that you meant to accompany Slippery Sam on last night's excursion. Not having the same confidence in that person which you seemed to have, I thought that, as your friend, it was my duty to be on hand in case of trouble. But I was not spying upon you."

"So you even went so far as to disguise yourself as a waiter, and serve beer to a lot of crooks, just to be near me? I am truly indebted to you. But I do not admire this masquerading. It is too theatrical. It savors too much of the dime-novel detective. And I suppose, of course, you had to bribe one of the regular waiters, who allowed you to take his place, eh?"

"Not exactly," said Mr. Barnes, hesitatingly, somewhat abashed by the criticism upon his methods, "but, Mr. Mitchel, we cannot always choose. I have known of the uses to which this boat has been put all summer, and I realized that it would be wise, and might become of extreme importance to me to have it in my power to be on board at any time. I therefore arranged matters with the head-waiter, and have played waiter on that boat so often that now my presence attracts no suspicion."

"That is just the conceit common to all of your profession. Your disguises are never penetrated. You are like the ostrich with his head in the sand, invisible—in your own mind. Now the fact is, your identity was very well known on the boat last night."

"Indeed? How do you know that?"

"The lecturer of the evening was talking to me about you. He considers you rather clever, but expressed his surprise that you should stoop to such antiquated methods as the employment of spies. He says that if he were in your place he would use his brains instead."

"Then he would accomplish little, for he has no brains." Mr. Barnes spoke angrily, for he had begun to lose patience. He thought that Mr. Mitchel went too far in his adverse criticisms, and in this perhaps he was right. But the truth was, Mr. Mitchel was excessively annoyed, not so much because a spy had followed him, but because for the first time in his experience he had not himself discovered the fact. He had therefore given vent to his feelings by resorting to satire.

Mr. Mitchel had decided that Preacher Jim was possessed of quite a superior quality of brains, and consequently he was attracted by Mr. Barnes's words, well knowing that they were not idly spoken.

"What do you mean by that?" said he.

"The man is a monomaniac," Mr. Barnes replied.

"On what subject?"

"Oh, on the subject of last night's lecture. I know his history very well, having observed him for many years. One of his delusions is that he is himself a great criminal. If you could get him to talk with you he would undoubtedly lead you to suppose that he has committed many crimes, and that through his marvellous skill he has not only escaped arrest, but has even avoided suspicion."

"But is not this true?"

"True as to his keeping out of the clutches of the law, but that has not required any skill. He has committed no crimes since he left the Reformatory, and he entered that place when a child. The man is not sound here," concluded Mr. Barnes, tapping his forehead significantly.

"He does not impress me as being unsound mentally," said Mr. Mitchel, doubtingly.

"Very likely not, at a single interview. Perhaps indeed you may even have concluded that he is endowed with unusual intelligence. But suppose that you were to meet him again, and that his conversation should be substantially the same? And that at many subsequent interviews with you he should always descant upon the same topics, in much the same words! Such has been my experience, and I am satisfied that his apparent brilliancy is really lustreless. As I said at first, he is a monomaniac."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Barnes, he has proven the fallacy

of one of your favorite theories, with scarcely an effort of his feeble brain."

"What theory?"

"You argued that the theft of the will is good evidence against young Mora. That the will would be useful to him, because its suppression would double his fortune."

"I did, and my opinion remains unaltered."

"Very good. But let me give you Preacher Jim's idea. The idea, let us say, of a practical crook, opposed to the theory of a skilful detective. That should be interesting, should it not? Well, then, suppose that any man, that is any man except the son, knew of this will, and first stole the document and then murdered old Mr. Mora to make it operative. Now, after this affair blows over, and young Mora is in possession of the property, including nine millions bequeathed elsewhere, could not the possessor of the will draw interest, as it were, upon the capital, by presenting this important paper, say quarterly, in substantiation of his claim?"

"So that is Preacher Jim's theory, is it? Well, it is precisely the sort of thing that a crazy man would work out, but which no sane man would either formulate or carry into effect. But considering it for a moment as among the possibilities, it is easily demolished. No theory is of value which is not substantiated by collateral circumstances. Now there are no facts to fit the supposition of a murderer from without, while the chain

of evidence which encircles the son is almost complete. But since you have been discussing this case with Preacher Jim, perhaps you spoke to him about the plaid suit of clothes. What are his views in that direction?"

"There he agrees with you. That is to say, he believes that the murderer wore them going in, as well as coming out, and that young Mora's suggestion that they were taken from his room to cover the blood-stained clothes of the intruder, is untenable."

"Thus you see, he advances contradictory theories, which substantiates mine as to his insanity. At one moment he thinks an outsider came in, and killed the old man to get the will, and use it against the son; and in the next breath he argues that the murderer wore the plaid suit, in which case the son must be the guilty party. So you see, Mr. Mitchel, I fear you wasted your evening, that is, if you went aboard that boat with any idea of probing this mystery."

"Which, of course, I did not," interrupted Mr. Mitchel.

"Well, anyway, I have to report that I did not waste my day. What would you say, Mr. Mitchel, were I to tell you that I have found that plaid suit, and that it is at present in my possession?"

"I should say that you are a very clever man, unless——"

"Unless what?"

“Unless someone found the things and brought them to you. That was a possibility prophesied by Preacher Jim.”

“Oh, indeed! But he probably meant the regular police. I do not have important clues and evidence thrust upon me in that manner. No, I discovered these things by the system which you deprecate. By spying.”

“This is becoming interesting. Give me the details.”

“I am to understand, then, that you will work with me on the case? You asked for twenty-four hours in which to consider the matter, but you have not given me your decision. You have spent the last half-hour chaffing me.”

“Oh, I meant no offense! Surely you have taken none? There’s my hand. Yes, I will study out this problem with you, but I stipulate for perfect liberty to proceed as I please.”

“Very good! Then I will relate what has happened since we parted. You speak sneeringly of spies, and make a plea for the use of brains alone. But it is only in fiction that a detective listens to the story of a crime, and finds the solution without visiting the locality in which it was committed, or seeing the suspected parties. In practical experience, the analytical work goes hand in hand with what you call the spy system. If suspicious circumstances point to a certain man, we watch his movements, and often we very soon discover that he is innocent or guilty. Especially when we can spy upon

him before he knows that he is suspected. With that knowledge, of course, the criminal uses more caution. To my mind, it was almost a certainty that young Mora killed his father. I argued that he was unaware of the fact that he had been observed by the watchman until he heard it on the following day. He had changed his clothing because of the blood spattered upon him, and to offset the watchman's testimony, he denied his first visit to the house."

"I follow you. Proceed."

"Think a moment. If a man can make a change of clothing, away from his own home in the middle of the night, reappearing in garments which are not new, and which he is known to have worn before, the logical deduction is that he must have another residence in which he is sufficiently at home to keep a part of his wardrobe there."

"Yes, you are right. Go on."

"Having removed his blood-stained garments, and having replaced them with a fresh suit, he would hurry home to be the one to discover and report the crime. But when he then learns that he had been seen in a suit conspicuous because of its pattern, he would naturally become anxious about that suit. Fearing that it might be found in that closet at his other house, where he had hurriedly left it, he would take the first opportunity to remove it. Since the murder, young Mora had been held to await the result of the inquest. Yesterday he

was released, the District Attorney evidently considering that to be the wisest course until he can obtain better evidence to present to the Grand Jury. Yesterday, therefore, the man had his first opportunity to go after the clothes. Therefore I watched him. I knew that he would be cautious, and so I was compelled to use the double spy system. I ordered another man to follow him, which he did, until, by doubling on his tracks, always in itself a suspicious circumstance, young Mora had succeeded in discovering that he was being followed, whereupon my man desisted. After that I had no difficulty in continuing the chase, for having rid himself of a spy he was no longer suspicious. I may say, in passing, that just after this my man met you with Slippery Sam near Apollo Hall, for we were in that neighborhood. Mora went straight to a house, which he entered, using a night-key. Half an hour later he came out again with a bundle. This time he looked about for spies, but seeing no one whom he mistrusted, he hurried, by the nearest way, to the river, where he tossed the bundle overboard. You see, it was no part of his intention to destroy the clothes. Indeed, I have no doubt that he hopes that they will be found, whereupon he will claim that the assassin has thrown them into the river. But, unfortunately, such a claim will not only be useless, but it will now injure his cause, for I have some ideas about these garments which may prove puzzling to him."

"I would like to hear them."

"We will come to that better, I think, when we meet Mr. Mora face to face."

"And when will that be?"

"I have taken the liberty to write him a letter, asking him to call here on business of vital importance."

"And do you think that he will come?"

"Yes! He is playing a bold game. It is time he were here now, because I asked him to be with us by ten, and it is now half-past. Therefore let me conclude. After recovering the bundle, which of course I did very promptly, I returned to the house, and there I discovered a pretty little woman who calls herself Mrs. Morton. Moreover, I am convinced that Morton and Mora are one and the same."

"You mean to say that he is secretly married under an assumed name?"

"So it appears at a superficial glance. What we may learn when we probe deeper remains to be seen. Ah! There is your bell. It is he."

Within a few minutes the door opened to admit a young man, faultlessly dressed in a suit of black. Young Mora was a beardless youth, with only the first suspicion of a moustache, but there was that in his manner which betokened a keen intellect, and sharp wits. His eyes wandered from one to the other of the two men fearlessly, and with a look which rather challenged them. His chin was large, and his jaws firmly set, indicating

great power of self-control. Withal, he was a manly fellow, and rather handsome, with his well chiselled features, and black hair parted evenly in the middle, but brushed so that it did not seem effeminate. Mr. Mitchel eyed him narrowly, and a new interest in the case sprang up within his mind. Could this be a murderer? If so he fancied that it would be difficult to prove. He therefore awaited the interview between Mr. Barnes and the new-comer with anticipations of enjoyment. It was to be a battle of wits, which always allured him.

"You asked me to call here, I believe, Mr. Barnes," said Mora, himself beginning the conversation.

"I did," replied the detective. "Permit me to present you to Mr. Leroy Mitchel; and now, if you please, be seated."

The two men bowed, and Mr. Mitchel handed a chair, which Mora took.

"Mr. Mora," continued Mr. Barnes, "you may wonder why I have asked you to call here. I will therefore clear up that point at once. Since your release from the hands of the police, I understand that you have offered ten thousand dollars reward for the arrest and conviction of the man who murdered your father. Am I right?"

"Quite correct."

"In that case I mean to earn the reward."

"I shall be as pleased to pay it to you as to any other man."

“Ah! No doubt! But would you be pleased at all, at the arrest and conviction of the criminal? The real criminal I mean?”

Mr. Barnes spoke slowly, with significant emphasis upon some of his words, and both he and Mr. Mitchel observed the young man closely, but detected no sign of uneasiness. His reply was terse and pertinent.

“I should. It is the only absolute proof of my own innocence which will be convincing to the world.”

“Always supposing, of course, that you are innocent,” said Mr. Barnes, mercilessly.

“My innocence is not a supposition. It is a fact,” retorted Mora, quickly, but without any show of temper.

Mr. Mitchel was delighted with him, though his perfect defense against the attack of the detective was only what he had been led to expect, from what he had heard of him.

“So you have insisted,” resumed Mr. Barnes. “Your innocence, then, being a fact, as you call it, you have no fear of any investigation that I may make?”

“I have no fear of any truths that you might unearth. I am only afraid of your blunders.”

“Well, then, in order to avoid my blundering, would you be willing to reply to a few questions, which if truthfully answered, might prevent my slipping into error?”

“If you can convince me of your good faith, I would.”

“And what do you mean by my good faith?”

“I will tell you frankly, If you are trying honestly to

unravel the mystery of my father's death, I will assist you to the extent of my ability. If, however, you are merely piecing together evidence upon which you hope to prove my own guilt, why I am not such an ass as to help you."

"No, of course not. Well then, Mr. Morton, I can assure you of my good faith. I am honestly trying to find the real murderer. Will you answer my questions?"

Mr. Barnes called him Mr. Morton to note the effect of his words, and he was satisfied ; for though the detective did not act as though aware of having used a wrong name, but continued so that one might readily have thought it a chance slip of the tongue, Mora started perceptibly, bit his lip, and strained every muscle in his body in his effort to preserve his self-control. All of this Mr. Barnes saw, and he considered that his manœuvre had succeeded.

Mr. Mitchel closely observing both men, also comprehended the intent of the detective as well as its effect, but he decided that Mr. Barnes had made a grave error. It seemed more than probable that Morton was an *alias* of the man before them, and so much had been proven by taking him by surprise. But, at the same time, he was now on his guard, and could better prepare his defense, especially as Mr. Barnes could not play his trump cards at once. The situation, therefore, to Mr. Mitchel, was increasing in interest.

"I will answer whatever you choose to ask," presently came Mora's reply.

"You have suggested, Mr. Mora, that the murderer of your father took your plaid suit of clothes and wore them over his own when leaving the house. Do you still adhere to that theory?"

"I never said that I believed it," was the answer.

"You did not claim to believe it?" exclaimed the detective, thoroughly astonished.

"No," said Mora, coolly. "Let me explain. I think it was you who advanced a theory, that because a man in a plaid suit was seen at our house, it stood proven that I was there. To parry your attack I suggested a theory equally tenable, which agreed with my claim of innocence as well as your theory sustained your charge of guilt. But you cannot find it in the records that I said I believed my own proposition. It was the first that occurred to me, and I utilized it. I could think of others equally good, perhaps better, for that one had a flaw in it, which I was surprised to see passed unnoticed."

"Perhaps you would not mind telling me the flaw in your own proposition," said Mr. Barnes, with a slight sneer.

"With pleasure," answered Mora, ignoring the tone of sarcasm. "It is very evident. If the watchman was to be relied on when he said that he saw the plaid suit

come out of the house, he must have been equally right in saying that he saw it go in. See?"

He laughed in a tantalizing manner, and Mr. Barnes was annoyed. Mr. Mitchel was startled a little to hear Mora using the identical argument advanced by Preacher Jim. Yet Mr. Barnes thought the latter insane, while here was an important point, overlooked by himself, though clear to two others.

"You said that you could advance other theories agreeing with your plea of innocence, yet explaining the fact about the suit of clothes," said Mr. Barnes, determined to press this matter. "I would like to hear one. One without a flaw this time."

"Nothing easier. Let us suppose that the murderer stole the suit before committing his crime, instead of afterwards, and there you are. The watchman's story is true, and yet I am not in it, to use a slang phrase. Not in the suit, I mean. What do you say to that?"

"I asked you for a theory without a flaw," replied Mr. Barnes.

"And where is the flaw in this?"

"If your clothing had been stolen, you would have complained of the loss," said the detective.

"Not if the theft occurred on the night of the murder, and was therefore unknown to me at the time."

"Not good enough, Mr. Mora. No one entered that house that night but yourself and the murderer, if indeed there were two. No thief went in earlier in the

evening and came out again, as he must have done, to be seen going in wearing your suit."

"You are very shrewd, Mr. Detective, but you are not omniscient. You argue from the premise that the suit was in the house, whereas, as a matter of fact, it was not."

"Where, then, was it?"

"At some rooms I have down in Essex Street."

The audacity of this reply made Mr. Barnes start to his feet, while Mr. Mitchel, admiring the craftiness of the move, listened with redoubled interest.

"Then you admit that you have another home," ejaculated the detective.

"Why not, since you know it?" was the cool rejoinder.

"Ah, then you also confess that you call yourself Morton there, and that you have a wife, who——"

"Not so fast, Mr. Barnes. I am not confessing any such nonsense. I had a room there, because I found it convenient in my slumming trips to sleep down town occasionally; also to have a place where I could change my clothing to less expensive apparel than I usually wear. I also think it safe enough to say that there is a Mrs. Morton in the same house. I will go further, and tell you that I know the lady very well, and that it was she who recommended the room to me. When I engaged the place I gave the name Morton, desiring, first, to hide my own identity, and, secondly, to account for

my friendliness with the young woman. But no one in that house will tell you that I posed as the woman's husband. They believed me to be her brother-in-law. Her husband is away somewhere."

"Then there is nothing between you and this woman?"

"Nothing but friendship. She often obtained entrance for me into places where I could study the life of that section, but which would have been impenetrable to anyone not known. She was useful to me in that way, and I have the kindest feelings for her. If you find anything suspicious about that, you are welcome to make the most of it."

Mr. Barnes began to think that he had made a mistake in mentioning the name Morton. Mr. Mitchel knew it. This explanation, however improbable, was one that it would be difficult to disprove, especially as Mora could readily warn his associates in the house, and coach them to support his story. Mr. Barnes, however, did not entirely despair.

"Then it was from this house that you now think that your clothes were stolen."

"I do not think so. I assert it."

"At last we get to something tangible. The suit was stolen from the house in Essex Street; the murderer wore it to your home, and, after killing your father, came out again in the same garb. So much we know.

Now, what did he do with these blood-stained garments?"

"Ah, that is for the great detective, Mr. Barnes, to discover."

"My own idea would be, that he would not destroy them," said the detective, appearing not to notice the other's sneering tones. "Shall I tell you why?"

"By all means."

"Because his wearing them at all must have been a part of his scheme. He wished others to think that you committed the deed. He would, therefore, prefer to have the things found."

"That is very probable."

"One good place to throw anything, which one wishes to have found, is in the river. Therefore I fancy that the murderer might have thrown the suit into the river. What do you think?"

Mora did not quail before this very significant speech. On the contrary, with great coolness he said:

"I think that you are mistaken."

"And why do you think that I am mistaken?" said Mr. Barnes.

"Because," said Mora, rising to his feet and boldly facing Mr. Barnes, who also arose, "Because the murderer did not throw them into the river. It was I who did that."

"You?" gasped Mr. Barnes, utterly taken aback, as

he saw his supposedly strong evidence against this man about to be swept aside. "You say that you threw the suit into the river?"

"Do you doubt it? Did you not see me—you—you spy!"

The last words came forth with a hissing sound, and the young man assumed a threatening attitude, which tempted Mr. Mitchel to speak for the first time.

"Come, no violence!" he exclaimed, rising quickly, and grasping Mora's upraised arm. The younger man wrenched himself loose by a quick movement, and turned to confront Mr. Mitchel.

"And who are you?" he cried. "You have been sitting by in silence while this—this thief-taker has been trying to twist something out of my mouth which he could use to place a rope around my neck. A nice business you both are in."

"You do not know me, Mr. Mora, or you would not speak so harshly. In my conversations with Mr. Barnes I have argued that you are innocent."

"I presume you expect me to be grateful to you for that. Well, I am not. I am not guilty, and I defy all such detectives as this Mr. Barnes here."

"You may defy me as much as you like," said Mr. Barnes, hotly, exasperated by the contemptuous words which had been used. "But you have admitted that since the murder, you had the plaid suit in your possession, and

that you attempted to dispose of it. That you will find very difficult to explain."

"I should never hope that any explanation of mine would penetrate your thick skull," said Mora, "and I would not attempt it, except that perhaps your friend here is more reasonable than yourself, and might persuade you of the stupidity of having me arrested, which I presume is the next step which you contemplate."

"No other course would be open to me, unless you can account for your very suspicious action," replied Mr. Barnes.

"All things are suspicious to those who suspect," said Mora. Then turning to Mr. Mitchel, he continued: "This man admits that if the murderer wore my clothing, it was because he wished me to be suspected. Very well. Upon my release yesterday I hastened to the Essex Street house, because I had an idea which was quickly confirmed. The man stole my clothes, and after killing my father, he returned them to the closet from which he had taken them. Imagine my position, if my connection with the house had been learned, and the clothes found in my closet, with the blood on them? On finding them, I was terrified, and I lost my head. I made the great mistake of hurrying with them to the river. I see now that I should have acted otherwise."

"What should you have done?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"I should have gone to the police station, and told the

truth. The truth will always prevail—only in this instance——”

He hesitated, seemed confused, and stopped, leaving the sentence incomplete.

“Only in this instance the truth was so improbable that the police might have misconstrued your action into a bold game of bluff,” said Mr. Mitchel, finishing it for him. “Is that your idea?”

“Yes. We’ll let it go at that.” He looked at Mr. Mitchel keenly for a few moments, then suddenly added, “I wish you gentlemen a very good morning,” and hurried from the apartment.

Mr. Mitchel waited for Mr. Barnes to speak first, and very soon the detective asked :

“Well, Mr. Mitchel, what do you think?”

“I think I could have finished that young man’s sentence exactly as he had framed it mentally. I think I could supply the words which he suppressed. I think your case is getting to be intensely interesting. And I think that I will take a walk—alone—if you will excuse me.”

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. BARNES AT WORK.

WHEN young Mora left the room so suddenly, Mr. Barnes, before asking for Mr. Mitchel's opinion, had hurried to the window, and had so placed himself behind the curtains, that he commanded a view of the street, though himself well screened from view. This precaution was well taken, for he saw Mora closely examine the window before jumping into his cab, which awaited. As the vehicle was driven away he asked his question, but he continued to gaze into the street, until in a few moments another cab turned the corner and went in the same direction as the first. By this time Mr. Mitchel had replied, and Mr. Barnes found time to answer :

“ You wish to take a walk alone ? That means you do not desire my companionship. Well, that is satisfactory, for I believe I can do what must be done now with more facility if I, too, am alone.”

He paused as though expecting Mr. Mitchel to speak, but that gentleman could not have been curious to know what the detective contemplated, for he remained silent. Mr. Barnes, therefore, at once took his leave.

In the street, he stood still a moment, looking after the two cabs, which were still in sight. He then walked rapidly in the opposite direction for a couple of blocks, when he turned and hurried to the nearest station of the Elevated railroad. Twenty minutes later he was standing in a doorway, nearly opposite to the Mora mansion. Here he waited so long, that, patient detective though he was, he began to be restive, and would come from his hiding-place, gaze quickly up and down the street, and then hurry back to his retreat between the inner and outer doors.

At last the sound of wheels satisfied him, and he slipped behind a door, being thus completely hidden, though through the crevice he could still observe the Mora dwelling.

The cab drove up, and young Mora alighted. He paid his fare, and then he did a somewhat strange thing. He looked up and down the street, until his cab had turned into the avenue and disappeared ; then he went up his stoop and hid behind the outer door of his own house, exactly as Mr. Barnes was hiding opposite. The detective wondered what this manœuvre might mean, but he soon discovered.

Two or three minutes had elapsed when a man slowly passed, who looked sharply into the Mora house. Instantly young Mora darted forth and seized him, at the same time touching the electric button which summoned his butler. Mr. Barnes could make out, by his gesticu-

lation, that the new-comer was protesting, but Mora held him firmly, giving some orders to his servant which sent that worthy hurrying down the street, without waiting to get a hat. A few minutes later the man returned with a policeman. Then there was apparently some argument, but eventually the officer went off, leading the man by the arm, despite his continued protests, while Mora looked after them with a smile.

Mr. Barnes saw and comprehended all that had taken place. He smiled also.

"You may dispose of that man, my boy, but now you have Jack Barnes to deal with," he mused.

This is what had occurred. When Mora left Mr. Mitchel's house, Mr. Barnes was satisfied that as he jumped into his cab, he merely exclaimed "Home," for he seemingly uttered but a single word. Mora being a man of wealth, the detective had rightly imagined that he would come to the house in a cab. To be prepared against all emergencies, he had consequently stationed a cab within reasonable distance, the occupant of which was one of his spies. When he saw the second cab go by therefore, he felt assured that even though he might have made a mistake, Mora would be watched. On the supposition, however, that he was correct, he had taken the Elevated road, which had enabled him to get to the house ahead of the vehicles. That he had been compelled to wait so long argued that Mora must have stopped on the way and Mr. Barnes would have been

very glad now for a few words with his spy, who was being led off by the policeman.

It was evident that Mora had noticed the cab following him, and had craftily rid himself of the spy by having him arrested. That he could have any suspicion of the near presence of Mr. Barnes seemed highly improbable. Therefore the detective congratulated himself upon his success, and had no fear that he would be unable to keep his man in sight for the rest of the day.

Young Mora then went into his house, and very shortly after Mr. Barnes observed that the shutter of one of the windows of the parlor was slightly opened ; just enough to enable anyone within to peep out.

"He 's a careful devil," growled the detective. "He has heard of the double spy method, and even though he ought to feel certain that there is no other spy around, he is trying to discover one. I must be very cautious."

The shutter was soon closed again, and half an hour passed with nothing to break the monotony of the watch, when suddenly the door was opened and a man came out and walked rapidly down the street. Mr. Barnes was on the point of hurrying after him, when he suddenly stopped, just in time to prevent himself from passing beyond the protection of the door. Taking a small opera glass from his pocket he looked at the man for some moments, and then at the various windows of the house opposite.

"You devil!" he muttered half aloud. "You almost caught me that time. So! You've dressed your valet up in your clothes, and sent him out to be followed by any spy who may be about. Well, my boy, the next time you try that on me, don't select a man who takes three strides to your one. Ah! There you are, are you?"

This time it was Mora himself who came out of the house, dressed in totally different attire. He seemed to be altogether at ease, and to be careless whether detectives were about or not, for without haste, and without looking back, he quietly walked up the street.

"Shall I follow him, or his man?" thought Mr. Barnes. "I believe that he is the sort who would never make a confidant of anyone. The valet was but a decoy in case I had another spy posted near his house. He will himself attend to whatever business he has in hand."

Mr. Barnes now came cautiously forth, and began shadowing Mora with the skill of a veteran. In the side street he kept so far in the rear, and always so near a door or a tree-box, that if Mora had turned his head ever so quickly, he would not have seen Mr. Barnes. On Broadway, which they soon reached, the crowded nature of the thoroughfare made it possible to keep closer, but he never risked to approach too near.

And so they passed on down Broadway, the detective always keeping discreetly at a proper distance, until they approached Delmonico's. Here Mora went in, and tak-

ing a seat at a table near the window, satisfied Mr. Barnes by his action that he no longer supposed that he was watched. Whatever the business which had called him out, he seemed to be in no haste, for he took his time over his luncheon, then called some acquaintances whom he recognized, and ordered wine and cigars, which they all discussed together, until more than two hours had elapsed. Then suddenly looking at his watch, he seemed surprised to find it so late, for he spoke a few words to his friends, then hurried out and crossed quickly to Sixth Avenue. Mr. Barnes of course kept him in sight and took a street car following the one into which Mora had jumped.

Much to the surprise of the detective, Mora alighted at the Jefferson Market police station, and went into the court-room. At the risk of being observed, Mr. Barnes followed as far as the doorway, where, with a nod to the policeman on guard, he placed himself so that he could peep in.

Very soon he understood Mora's errand. He had visited the place to make a charge against the spy, whom he had caused to be arrested, and to Mr. Barnes's chagrin his man was fined ten dollars for annoying Mr. Mora, and was moreover warned not to repeat the offense.

Mr. Barnes found a hiding-place which screened him, while Mora passed out, but the young man now walked so rapidly, that Mr. Barnes feared to take the time to have a few words with his man, who was paying his fine,

lest he should lose sight of Mora. He felt certain that he had remained up town merely to keep this engagement at the police court, but that now, the affair being settled, and the spy ordered not to follow him, he would hasten to attend to that which he was so unwilling to have anyone witness.

There is a station of the Elevated road only a few steps away from the Jefferson Market court-house, and Mora ran up the stairway three steps at a jump. He seemed to be in a hurry. Mr. Barnes hastened after him, for a train was approaching. He was compelled to take the risk of being seen, lest by too much caution he should lose his man altogether. But though he was scarcely ten feet behind him, as they passed the ticket chopper, Mora took no notice of him, not even looking back. Mr. Barnes, however, stepped into a different car. At Bleeker Street, the very next station, Mora left the train, thus again proving his anxiety now to reach his destination, for he had taken the Elevated road for a ride of less than half a mile. Descending to the street he walked rapidly eastward, and Mr. Barnes began to suspect that he was now going to the house in Essex Street, which surmise proved correct.

The basement of this old-fashioned house had been converted into a small shop, which was at this time occupied by a baker; and it was into the baker's shop, instead of through the main entrance, that Mr. Barnes was surprised to see Mora go. Anxious to learn if pos-

sible what his object was, Mr. Barnes went near the window and peeped between the huge loaves of bread, which almost obscured the whole interior. He saw the baker give Mora a letter, which the latter opened and read, and then turning, came out so quickly that Mr. Barnes would have had no chance to conceal himself, had there been any lurking place nearby, which there was not. He did the next best thing, which was to walk away as fast as possible in the hope that Mora might go in an opposite direction, or if not, that he might fail to recognize him.

Imagine Mr. Barnes's chagrin, when Mora caught up with him, touched him on the shoulder, and caused him to turn and face him.

"Well, Mr. Barnes," said Mora, "I hope I have not inconvenienced you any, by taking so long to eat my luncheon? Too bad, I could not ask you in, but I had some friends with me who are a little particular about their associates, and they draw the line at detectives. You understand."

Then with a tantalizing laugh he turned and walked off, leaving Mr. Barnes speechless with astonishment.

"How the deuce did he know that I was following him?" exclaimed Mr. Barnes, forgetting that he was alone, and speaking aloud.

"He did not know it," said a voice, which made Mr. Barnes even more amazed, for he recognized the speaker as Mr. Mitchel.

"Mr. Mitchel!" he cried. "By all that's wonderful, what brought you here?"

"I came by the Elevated as far as possible. You see, I was afraid that I should be too late."

"Too late for what?"

"Too late to see what I have seen."

"And what have you seen?"

"All that has occurred! I have been here ever since I left you this morning."

"Do you mean that you came directly here, from your house?"

"I do not think that I wasted as much as a minute. You see I recognized at a glance the importance of being here."

"And I did not!" groaned Mr. Barnes.

"Oh, yes you did," said Mr. Mitchel, "only you took the wrong way of reaching here. Instead of using your brains, you utilized the old-fashioned spy system. Force of habit, I suppose."

"Mr. Mitchel, I have made a blunder. I admit it, and I feel sore enough, without your chaffing. But never mind! Thank heaven you foresaw that the next move would be made here, and so you came direct to the scene of action, and awaited developments. Was that it?"

"Yes! That was the way in which I argued it out. But you would have been here on time, if you had not made the mistake of following the wrong man."

“What do you mean?”

“Mora dressed his servant up, in his clothes. You probably detected the trick, and concluded that he was merely using the man as a decoy.”

“Yes. I did not believe that he would trust his servant in an important matter.”

“Ah, but he did not need to make a confidant of him. What his man had to do was very simple.”

“How do you mean? What has occurred?”

“I came here early, and have loitered in the saloon opposite ever since. After a time a carriage drove up, and a man dressed in the clothing which Mora wore at my house, alighted. I saw at once, however, that it was not Mora. He went into the house, remained only a few minutes, and when he came out, went off on foot, leaving the carriage standing. Evidently he was intrusted merely with the delivery of a letter.”

“To Mrs. Morton! Yes! You are right! Go on!”

“Nearly an hour passed, and I was hoping that you might arrive. Then a woman came out and entered the carriage. Next a man brought out a trunk, which was placed on the carriage seat, and then the vehicle was driven away.”

“And you did not follow that carriage?”

“How could I do so?” was Mr. Mitchel’s unsatisfactory reply.

“You are right again! There are no cabs at hand in

this neighborhood. Well, it's too bad. They've beaten us for the time. But I'll find that woman again, or my name's not Barnes. Come! We will go into the house."

"I have already been in," said Mr. Mitchel, quietly. "There is nothing to be gained. The woman has gone, and she has taken her personal effects with her. She left a letter for Mora in the baker shop, which you saw him receive. Curiously enough, the room occupied by Mora, when he calls himself Morton, remains untouched. I have seen the landlady, and she tells me that Mrs. Morton has 'left for good.' I asked about Mr. Morton, and she replied: 'Bless your 'eart, 'e's my best lodger, 'e is. 'E takes 'is room by the quarter.'"

"Did you ask whether he was Mrs. Morton's husband?"

"I thought it a useless question myself, but I also imagined that you might expect me to ask it, so I did so. She declared, as I felt assured that she would, that there was nothing between the two but friendship. In short, she told the same story which Mora told us. She had thoroughly learned her lesson, you may be sure."

"You mean that he sent a letter to Mrs. Morton, instructing her how to arrange matters? Of course. What a fool I've been, to waste such valuable time following that devil about. But did you not find anything that might serve as a clue?"

"Nothing whatever in the woman's room, but I took the liberty of removing this from the mantel in Morton's apartment."

He handed Mr. Barnes a cabinet photograph, which that gentleman looked at carefully. It was the picture of a young girl, and printed on the card were the words : "The Lily of the Valley."

"What does this amount to?" asked Mr. Barnes. "This is a photograph of a little actress who sings in the concert halls on the Bowery."

"Then you see no significance in the fact that I found it in Mora's room?"

"None whatever," said Mr. Barnes. "The picture is pretty, and can be bought for twenty-five cents. I'll wager that every 'Johnny' in town has one on his mantel."

"You do not think that it is the photograph of this Mrs. Morton?"

"Why, no! Of course not. Do you not see how youthful this girl is? That is not all artifice, though she poses as a child actress on the stage. I happen to know that the 'Lily of the Valley' is scarcely more than sixteen, and she is more of a child in her manner than even her years indicate."

"She's a very pretty child," said Mr. Mitchel, taking the photograph back and looking at it. While thus engaged he was startled to hear Mr. Barnes say in an undertone :

“Look ! Look quickly at the window on the top floor of that house !” Mr. Mitchel did so, but merely caught a glimpse of a man withdrawing his head. It disappeared before he could recognize it.

“Do you know who it was ?” asked Mr. Mitchel.

“Why, yes,” said Mr. Barnes. “I wonder what he is doing in that house. It seems strange.”

“Who is it ?” asked Mr. Mitchel again. “You have not told me.”

“Why, unless I am greatly mistaken, I should say it was your crazy lecturer, Preacher Jim.”

CHAPTER IX.

AN EXPERT OPINION.

MR. BARNES'S words astonished Mr. Mitchel, and aroused a train of thought which made him more than ever interested in the complicated problem which they were endeavoring to solve. He could not immediately arrive at any definite conclusions, but these were the points to which he attached the greatest importance.

First, young Mora suggested to the police that the murderer had worn his plaid suit over his own blood-stained garments when leaving the house. Second, Preacher Jim had contended that this could not be, because if the watchman was to be believed when claiming that he had seen the wearer of the suit come out of the house, he should be credited with being equally correct in his statement that he had seen it on the man going in. Third, Mora advanced exactly the same argument, and then claimed that the suit had been appropriated by the murderer, who had stolen it from the Essex Street house. Fourth, if Mr. Barnes was correct, here was Preacher Jim peeping from a window of this very house.

What logical deduction should he accept? Why did Mora first advance one theory, and then adopt another? In his excitement, in the first place, had he forgotten that the watchman must be believed wholly, or not at all? And was the second theory invented to meet the occasion?

Since Preacher Jim apparently had access to this house, had he shown Mora the mistake that he had made? As a professional crook, was he coaching this young man through the difficulties of his first crime? Or, if they were intimate, as they must be according to that view, were they accomplices? Had Mora committed the deed himself, or had he secured the services of Preacher Jim for the bloody deed?

Or, since Preacher Jim had suggested a sufficient motive for the murder by a professional crook, had he conducted the enterprise himself in order to obtain the will, and subsequently blackmail Mora? Had he stolen the clothes in which he might enter the Mora mansion, deceiving the watchman as to his identity, and had he then artfully returned them?

Mr. Mitchel had just formulated this question mentally, when Preacher Jim himself emerged from the house and approached. This action showed that he was not afraid to have it known that he had been in the house. Mr. Mitchel admired his boldness, and was curious to hear what he would say.

"Well, gentlemen," said Preacher Jim, nodding to Mr. Barnes, who acknowledged the salutation, and ex-

tending his hand to Mr. Mitchel, who took it, "it has been an entertaining drama, has it not? Though pardon me, Mr. Barnes, I am forgetting. You missed a part of it, eh?"

"Missed a part of what?" asked the detective, coldly. "I do not understand you."

"Oh, you are not so stupid as you would have me believe, Mr. Detective. If you were, certain friends of mine would be at liberty instead of serving the government. I allude to the hasty departure which you arrived too late to witness."

"How do you know that?" asked Mr. Mitchel, sharply.

"I have eyes in my head, and brains in my skull. I have been looking on from the gallery as it were, while you, Mr. Mitchel, occupied a private box, and Mr. Barnes here, standing room only, and at the very end of the play too."

"What do you mean by the gallery?" asked Mr. Mitchel, persistently.

"Four flights up. Top floor, front window. Place empty. Last tenant moved out on account of rats and a leaky roof. Next tenant not yet in prospect, so my friend, Slippery Sam, who boasts the pleasure of your acquaintance, and who is not very particular about where he sleeps or how, so long as no rent is collected, has pre-empted the place, and taken up his temporary lodging therein during the last few days."

“How many days, to be exact?”

“Ah, I see! You wish to work up our friend’s history? Well, to be exact, eight days. At least, that is according to his statement, and I rely on it, because—well, because I do not think that Sam has the courage to lie to Preacher Jim.”

“And you were calling on him, I suppose,” suggested Mr. Mitchel.

“Oh, no, not at all! I have never before been in the house, though of course I have known where Sam was residing ever since he moved in. That is according to our system, which I think I explained to you. But since you seem to be curious to know how and why I was in the place, I have no reason to conceal the facts from you.”

“I do not deny that I would like to know,” said Mr. Mitchel.

“Well, then, in connection with certain matters, I came down into this neighborhood to watch Sam personally for a few hours. Therefore, you may be sure I did not call on him as you suggest. Reaching here, I saw you playing the spy, and I decided that it would be quite as profitable perhaps to watch you. I might learn just what you are up to, you see. I felt repaid for my trouble when I saw Sam join you, for then I knew——”

Here he paused for a moment, because, observing Mr. Mitchel closely while speaking, at this point he saw that gentleman dart a swift glance in his direction, which

he rightly interpreted to mean that he did not wish Mr. Barnes to know more of his interview with Slippery Sam. Preacher Jim therefore concluded his sentence in different words from those which he had at first contemplated using. He went on :

“——that I could kill two birds with one stone, and keep an eye on both of you. I saw that Sam did not intend to return to the house ; and while he was talking with you, I concluded that I could not do better than to run up to the room which he had just left. I might make some discoveries there, and the window offered a good place from which to observe you.”

“So you were playing the spy then,” said Mr. Barnes, with a sneer. “Mr. Mitchel told me that you had boasted that were you a detective, you would not adopt such methods.”

“Quite true !” replied Preacher Jim, promptly. “If I were a detective. A large if, Mr. Barnes, eh ? But as I am only a common criminal, why the rule does not apply, does it ?”

“You were playing detective, if we believe your own story, therefore you should have used your brains—if you have any. That was your brag.”

“As to my brains, you should not expect me to be as clever as yourself. As to my spying—that is another affair. You detectives have an axiom—‘Set a thief to catch a thief.’ We crooks have another : ‘Spy on a spy

and he won't spy you.' We must live up to axioms or the literature of the language would lose its lustre."

"Spy on me as much as you like," said Mr. Barnes, testily. "Much good may it do you."

"This is idle talk," interrupted Mr. Mitchel, "and mere waste of time. Preacher Jim, you prophesied that the plaid suit of clothes, supposed to have been worn by the murderer of Mr. Mora, would be found."

"I did, and I still believe so."

Mr. Barnes made signs to Mr. Mitchel, protesting against what he foresaw was about to occur, but that gentleman did not heed him.

"You are right. The suit has been found."

"Indeed? Where? How?"

"Young Mora was seen to throw it into the river, and it was fished out again."

"Young Mora? Threw the things into the river? That looks suspicious. Very suspicious. It almost upsets my own theory."

"I would like to hear exactly what your theory is," said Mr. Barnes.

"I have no doubt," replied Preacher Jim, with a scornful laugh, "but aiding detectives is out of my line. I'm a crook, but not so low down as that."

"Tell me why you think Mora's action suspicious?" asked Mr. Mitchel, with a signal to Mr. Barnes to allow him to continue the conversation,

"Why, you ought to see that yourself," said the criminal. "Mora's proposition is that the murderer wore these togs over his own. Having found them he ought to have carried them to the police station that their condition might corroborate his theory, if possible. That he did not do this, tempts one to think that he has little faith in his own theory."

"Again you are right," said Mr. Mitchel, admiring the logical manner in which the man reached his deductions. "Mora now says that he offered that explanation to the police, because he thought of nothing better at the time. Now he argues that the murderer stole his clothes here, in Essex Street, wore them to the house, committed the crime, and returned them to the closet from which he had taken them."

"So that is the new edition of his theory, is it? Quite a pretty story. The criminal must have had a fairy god-mother to throw dust in people's eyes, lest they see her *protégé* in all this coming and going. Pah! Mora is a coward."

"Why so?"

"He hit the nail on the head the first time, and then is afraid of the consequences of telling the truth."

"Speak more plainly."

"I will do so, though I ought not to be teaching this detective his trade. But this time I will show him that I can use brains. Listen! Let us imagine the circumstances. Mora told the police that the murderer wore

the plaid suit over his own clothing. The presumption of course being that there was blood upon him. When released from the lock-up, he hurries down here and looks over the clothes. He finds upon them something that corroborates his theory. Then he grows alarmed. He does not object to having the police *think* he has told the truth, but he fears to have them *know* that he did. They might wonder how he chanced to make so good a guess."

"And for that reason you think he finally decided to destroy the things? You may be right, but we could test it, if Mr. Barnes would permit us to see the clothes. Will you?"

Mr. Barnes had serious objections to this, but did not like to refuse a request, which he saw that Mr. Mitchel made with great earnestness. Therefore, with much reluctance he led the way to his office in lower Broadway, and produced the bundle of clothing. The garments had been opened and dried, and were now in a wrinkled and slightly shrunken condition.

"Now then," said Mr. Mitchel, addressing Preacher Jim, "you think there might have been something about these which would corroborate Mora's first theory. You must have had some definite thought in your mind, and I half suspect that I could guess what you mean. But I would be glad to have you tell we."

"It is very simple. These garments must have blood-stains upon them, or Mora would not have thrown them

into the river. The stains must have reached the clothes, either during the commission of the murder, or afterwards. In the first instance, the blood would primarily show upon the outside. In the second, it would be upon the inside, from contact with the other clothes."

"Very good as far as it goes. But as fresh blood would readily soak through the cloth, it would appear on either side, would it not?"

"You overlook the lining in the vest and upper part of the trousers. If the blood was spattered on the outside, during the killing, there would be but little if any stain upon the linings. If on the contrary these clothes were slipped over the blood-stained garments of the murderer, there would be much blood upon the linings, and very little comparatively would soak through to the outside, opposite to these places. In the unlined portions, it would, of course, be difficult to decide, but a man would be lucky indeed to have the blood spatter so fortunately."

As Mr. Mitchel listened, he thought of Mr. Barnes's statements that this man was mad. Could it be? If so he had some very rational moments. He now carefully examined the clothing himself. First he took up the coat, upon which he found nothing.

"No blood on that, I believe," said he passing it to Preacher Jim, who took it calmly and also looked it over. "So far there is no clue, one way or the other."

"I beg your pardon," said Preacher Jim. "You are mistaken."

"How? Do you find any stains?"

"No! But that does not prove that this coat may not furnish an important clue. I will explain after you have examined the other things."

"I find something here," said Mr. Barnes, who had been examining the trousers, "which seems to show that you have reasoned cleverly. There are a few blood stains near the knees, but there is only a slight one higher up, whereas the pocket is quite badly stained."

"Let me see," said Mr. Mitchel, taking the garment. "By heaven, you are right, Preacher Jim. The stain is on the side of the pocket which must have rested next to the garment which it covered, yet, although the cloth is thin, there is actually no stain on the other half of the pocket."

"That is strange," said Preacher Jim, coming and looking on. "How do you account for it?"

"I think that there was something in the pocket, which protected the other half. Who knows? It may have been the stolen will!"

"In which case the will would be bloody on one side," suggested Mr. Barnes.

"If it were found, and showed such a stain, what beautiful corroborative details we would have!" said Preacher Jim.

“Without such corroboration, we must be convinced by this alone, that Mora’s first theory was the correct one. The murderer wore these things over his own clothing. But you have not told us what evidence you find in the coat which is not stained?”

“You have not examined the vest. What do you find there?”

“The vest adds to the chain,” said Mr. Barnes, handing it to Mr. Mitchel. “See how badly the lining is stained on one side, and how little blood has soaked through.”

“Now, then, Preacher Jim,” said Mr. Mitchel, “what do you make out of the coat?”

“I thought likely that you would find some stain on the vest. If you had not done so, my theory would have been upset. As it is, you see that the murderer got a bad stain upon himself, above the waist, probably in the struggle with the man, after he was wounded. If he had been dressed in this coat, the stain would have been on it.”

“True,” interposed Mr. Mitchel. “But he might have removed his coat when he saw that the struggle was inevitable?”

“Very good! In that case, the vest would have had this blood fresh upon the outside, and the lining of the coat would have soaked up the moist blood, when the garment was put on again.”

“You are right,” said Mr. Mitchel. “Then it stands

proven, by these bloody marks, that the murderer did not wear these clothes, during the killing of Mr. Mora."

"All this is very pretty, and I give Preacher Jim credit," said Mr. Barnes, "for capital reasoning, at least in this case. Still I do not see that it aids us much. We are still no nearer to the identity of the murderer. We are forced to believe that no one went in or out of that house that night, except the man in the plaid suit. If the murderer was not so dressed, then he must have been in hiding on the premises, and must have committed the crime after young Mora came home, or he would not have been able to take the clothes as a disguise when going out."

"You are carrying us in too deep, and to no purpose," said Mr. Mitchel. "That theory is untenable, for you must remember that if Mora came home in the suit, it must have been he who went out again. Otherwise he could not have returned at five in the morning. But if he it was who wore the suit in, and then out of the house, how about the tale which these stains seem to tell? What do you make of it, Preacher Jim?"

"I believe that the murderer wore the suit going in, and coming out, but that he was dressed in his under-clothing only, during the killing."

"By heavens, you have guessed the truth!" exclaimed Mr. Barnes. "Mora came home, and disrobed partially, preparing to retire. Then he must have visited his father's room for some purpose. A quarrel ensued, dur-

ing which he killed the old man. No ! He must have gone to the room contemplating the crime, for he carried the weapon with him. Afterwards he dressed again, and went down to his Essex Street place, where he must have destroyed his underclothing. It was not until yesterday, that he remembered the possibility of the outer garments being also stained."

"Is that your opinion, Preacher Jim?" asked Mr. Mitchel, speaking slowly and watching the man closely. "Is it your belief that Mr. Mora was killed by his son?"

"Since you insist upon having my views, yes," replied Preacher Jim, gazing back into Mr. Mitchel's eyes unmoved. "I believe that Mr. Mora was killed by his son."

"So, then, we are all of one mind," said Mr. Barnes.

"Are we?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"True ! You have not expressed your opinion," answered Mr. Barnes.

"No ! I have not expressed my opinion as yet," said Mr. Mitchel.

CHAPTER X.

THE MOTHER OF A BORN CRIMINAL.

MR. MITCHEL and Preacher Jim left Mr. Barnes's office together, and after proceeding a short distance, Mr. Mitchel referred to the readiness with which his companion had understood him, when he had made a sign to him to say nothing about his having been in conversation with Slippery Sam, and he thanked him for having changed the subject.

"That is all very well, Mr. Mitchel," said Preacher Jim, "but you owe me an explanation, and I would like to have it now."

"What is it that you desire me to explain to you?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"I saw you talking with Slippery Sam, but I could not hear what you said, of course, being at the window on the top floor. But when the women came out and the carriage was driven off, and Sam followed, I easily understood that you had ordered him to learn where she would go."

"You are correct, and he is to report to me to-night."

"He will not do so."

"Why not?"

“Because he will not know.”

“You are mistaken. My cab was around the corner, and I gave Sam an order which transferred the vehicle to him. He will be easily able to keep the carriage in sight.”

“You do not grasp the situation. You have given him the means of following the carriage, but nevertheless he did not do so.”

“Did not do so? Why, how do you know what occurred after they passed out of our sight?”

“I know as well as though I had seen. I will tell you what took place. The carriage was driven rapidly to the Bowery; there it stopped, and the driver alighted. As soon as your cab came around the corner, the driver of the carriage hailed it, and then spoke to Sam. He told him not to follow him any farther, and Sam abandoned the chase, dismissed the cab, and strolled leisurely down town.”

“You intimate that the carriage driver was known to you; acting by your orders, perhaps?”

“More than that. You are right as far as you go. The driver is a member of our Society, and acted according to instructions. He was warned that he might be followed, and told to prevent it at all hazards.”

“Who gave him these orders?”

“Why, who else but the man who hired him?”

“Then you mean that Mora did this? That he is what you call a crook?”

“That will be for you and Mr. Barnes to discover. But you forget it was the valet who engaged the carriage.”

“Then he is——”

“One of us. We will now put it plainer, Mr. Mitchel ; let me be perfectly frank with you, and then perhaps you will be equally candid with me. Mora learned this morning that Mr. Barnes had discovered that he had a place in Essex Street, and he determined to prevent him from asking too many questions down there. He was shrewd enough to ‘go the long way around,’ as we say, in order to be sure that there were no spies after him. He soon learned that there was at least one, and so decided to send his man on the errand. This fellow came direct to our headquarters for assistance, and one of our special coachmen was put on the job. I happened to be at the rooms at the time, and I got enough out of the valet to feel assured that you would turn up somewhere near the Essex Street house. You see I judged that you would strike the scent by using your head, rather than by following Mora about, as Mr. Barnes did. Now it happened that Slippery Sam has been stopping at this same house, and remembering the intimacy which has sprung up between you two, I decided to be on hand personally, and at the same time I took the precaution to give special instructions to the coachman as to the course to pursue in case Sam should follow him. So you see, what seems such omniscience and omnipresence

on my part, is merely the result of confederation and system."

"Does Mora know the true character of his valet?"

"I shall leave you to ask him. You know the adage, 'Like master, like man.' When an employer has peculiar work to be done, he needs to hire a suitable man."

"Then you believe that Sam abandoned the pursuit?"

"It is more than belief. But now it is your turn to explain your position. I wish to know just what you are doing in this business."

"I agreed to assist Mr. Barnes, and I am doing so."

"You are undertaking more, Mr. Mitchel. Don't class me with your detective friend. You may hoodwink him, but I see farther than he does. You take very little interest in this Mora case."

"You are mistaken. I take the keenest sort of interest in solving this mystery."

"True in a measure. But you care nothing for the mere discovery of the murderer. That is Mr. Barnes's business, but it is not yours. You are a gentleman."

"I thank you for your good opinion, but since you do not accept my statement, perhaps you can guess what actuates me in this affair."

"I could, but I choose to have you tell me instead. Barnes suspects Mora, and with dogged persistency he kept a watch on his man. There is your true detective instinct, and it pays in the majority of cases. You either did not suspect him, or you were indifferent on

the point of his guilt. You went after the woman. Why?"

"I followed the French system, 'seek the woman.' I was sure that Mora would turn up in Essex Street. I merely took the shortest road to the scene of action. That is all."

"Yes. Perhaps you are telling the truth. But you do not tell all of the truth. Listen! You went into the house and searched the rooms of both the woman and Mora. Since then you have taken more interest in the woman. That is what I wish to have explained."

Mr. Mitchel thought he saw an opportunity, and hastened to take advantage of it. He took the photograph from his pocket, and handed it to his companion, remarking:

"I found that in Mora's room. That is why I am now anxious to find the woman."

"I don't follow you. Make it plainer."

He had taken the photograph, and his eyes now gazed upon it admiringly, but Mr. Mitchel was not able to judge from his countenance whether or not the original was known to him. But next he played his trump card.

"That photograph, Preacher Jim," said he, with deep meaning in his tones, "is the likeness of the mother of the infant found in the graveyard."

Preacher Jim started perceptibly, and looked at Mr. Mitchel in undisguised amazement.

"How do you make that out?" he asked, with emotion, which was evident though suppressed.

"By using my brains, Preacher Jim. Your own pet method, I believe." By this time the man had fully recovered his self-control, and handing back the photograph he laughed boisterously.

"Exceptional brains you must have. That is the picture of little Lily of the Valley, as she calls herself. A concert singer in the Bowery saloons. And you say she is that baby's mother. Why, can't you see by that picture that she is only a baby herself?"

"I imagine that she might have been about fourteen when this was taken, but how do I know her present age?"

"Well, I'll tell you. She's a little over sixteen. So you see she is still a child."

"My own mother married at fifteen," replied Mr. Mitchel, "so the girl's youthfulness cannot set aside my opinion. I am sure that I am right. Moreover, I am convinced that Mora is the father."

"What? Mora the father?" Preacher Jim laughed long and loudly. "I say, Mr. Mitchel, you are ruining your reputation in my mind. I thought you had more brains. Because you find the girl's picture in Mora's rooms, you jump to that queer conclusion. Let me show you how silly you are. Look here." He drew from his coat pocket a leather wallet, from which he took out a photograph, which also was a likeness of the

girl, in this instance in dancing costume. "There now," he continued, "perhaps you 'll change off, and say I 'm the father."

"Where did you get this?" asked Mr. Mitchel, ignoring the sarcastic tones of the criminal.

"We won't have to go far. Come across the street."

Mr. Mitchel followed him until they stood before a stationery store, where, in the window, there were exposed for sale numerous pictures of actresses, among which were several on which was printed, "The Lily of the Valley" and a placard announced that they could be bought for twenty-five cents each.

"There you are," said Preacher Jim. "Buy one and join the army of her admirers. Are you satisfied?"

"Quite satisfied," said Mr. Mitchel, in peculiar tones, which caused the criminal to eye him keenly. But he was gazing into the face of a human sphinx, and learned nothing.

"But look here," said Preacher Jim, "if you were so interested in this girl, why did you get Sam to follow the other woman?"

"The other woman?" asked Mr. Mitchel, with singular emphasis on the second word.

"Yes, the other woman. Mrs. Morton." Then after a pause, as though a new idea had occurred to him. "Oh, come now! You don't actually think that Mrs. Morton and Lilian Vale are one and the same?"

"What if I do think so?"

"Well, that's your privilege of course. Think as you like. It is no business of mine. But look here! To return to the main point. You are studying crime, are you not? Not as a detective, but as a criminologist? You would like to unearth the causes which lead to the existence of criminals, would you not?"

"You are by no means a fool," said Mr. Mitchel. "You have guessed my main interest in the work in hand. You might assist me very much in my studies if you chose."

"In what manner?"

"You claim to be a born criminal, and, to use a naturalist's term, I find you a most interesting specimen. I would very much like to meet the mother of a born criminal."

"You are not lacking in audacity, to make such a request. You wish me to introduce you to my mother?"

"I should esteem it as a special favor, and—" here he paused, and then continued impressively—"you will never regret having allowed me to meet her."

Preacher Jim looked into Mr. Mitchel's face searchingly, as though delving into the deepest recesses of his brain, seeking the true reading of his character. Presently he extended his hand, saying:

"Will you shake hands on that?" Mr. Mitchel promptly acquiesced and the criminal continued. "I believe you are as honest as you are bold. I will trust you. I will grant your request."

They walked along in silence, both men too engrossed in thought to interrupt the working of their brains by uttering words. Preacher Jim led the way to Mulberry Street, stopping a block above what was for so long a time known as "The Bend."

He stood before a narrow, dirty alley, which led to a rear tenement. Once more he addressed Mr. Mitchel.

"I seem to be in a queer mood. Why I have brought you here, passes my own comprehension. It is a very stupid thing, but I agreed to do it, and I never break my word. Bear that in mind. For good or ill, a promise from Preacher Jim is final and binding. And I promise you now, that if ever you use against me or mine any knowledge obtained here, where my poor old mother lives, your life will pay the forfeit. If the terms do not suit you, I will only be too glad to bid you good day."

"I will go in with you. Your words do not alarm me."

"They need not, unless you play the traitor."

Mulberry Street is one of the sights of the great metropolis, for many blocks being within a stone's throw of Broadway, the great business artery of the city. Millions upon millions' worth of property are piled in the stores, banks, and warerooms that line Broadway, the most important thoroughfare on the American continent. It is therefore natural that its sidewalks should be crowded. Yet, though Mulberry Street is almost as poor, as Broadway is rich, the crowds are denser. And

it is not an idle throng either, for on all sides are evidences of thrift. All the stores are occupied ; every hallway is converted into a diminutive shop ; and there are stands at the curb, and even in the middle of the street, loaded with wares, which the pedlars have to offer. The whole district being thus converted into a market-place, the purchasers and passersby are forced to thread their way, now on the sidewalk, but oftenest on the asphalt driveway, over which latter, by the bye, there is never a passageway for horse and wagon.

Yet, except for a very occasional family row, the scene is almost invariably orderly. The whole is picturesque from the very quaintness of the surroundings. It all seems so foreign to an American city, not even the English language being heard as one walks by. I say the scene is picturesque, but alas ! not the women. Raphael and Correggio have taught us how beautiful the daughters of Italy may be, but they could not have found their models in such a locality, where children of fourteen are attired like elderly women, and look older than they are, with their colorless cheeks, and sunken eyes, which seek the pavement because of the stoop in their backs, from carrying burdens. How could beauty thrive here ?

Mr. Mitchel took in the general scene at a glance, as he turned into the alley, leaving the kaleidoscopic array of color behind him, and passing into the gloom beyond, where all seemed colorless,

"Be careful where you walk," came a warning from Preacher Jim, just in time to prevent Mr. Mitchel from treading upon an infant, crawling along towards the street, in a state of nudity which would have attracted attention anywhere but in this neighborhood, where children who are nearly full grown are often clothed with but a single garment.

At the end of the alley, was a court, so called by courtesy, being in truth but little wider than the alley itself. At the back, rose up gauntly, between the main houses and the rising sun, a tall structure, erected in comparatively recent times, that the greedy owner of the ground, might squeeze a few more dollars from the pockets of the outcasts, whose only hope of happiness in this great "New Land," is to herd with those who can at least comprehend their own tongue. What matter, if this back tenement shut off both light and air from the twenty or thirty families living in the front houses? If you should speak to the landlord about it, he would reply :

"I do not compel them to remain. If they do not like it, let them move. This is a free country."

A free country ! Ay, truly ! Very free, when a price is put upon the very air !

An iron stairway running up the outside of the back tenement did double service ; serving both as entrance way for the lodgers, and as a fire-escape. An economic method of obeying the law which demands that these

poor devils shall at least not be burned alive. And since the fire-escape must be placed on the outside, why waste valuable, that is to say rentable, space, by erecting stairways within?

Mr. Mitchel followed Preacher Jim up to the third floor, where they rested a moment on the landing, while awaiting some response from a loud knocking upon the door.

"The old woman keeps her latch on, to keep out intrusive visitors," explained Preacher Jim, as he repeated his summons.

But after some time, there being still no sound from within, he turned the knob; to his surprise the door yielded, and he led the way in.

"She 's out I guess," he said, "or the door would n't be open. She 's got no way to lock it on the outside. The lock 's broken. It 's dark enough in here, is n't it?"

It was dark enough, though Mr. Mitchel observed that the one window in the room was obscured by neither blind, shutter, nor shade. No light entered, because there was no light that could find a way in.

"I'll strike a light," said the criminal. "Have you a match?" Mr. Mitchel handed him his match safe, and in a few minutes, a smoky lamp was dimly illuminating the room.

"What have we here?" exclaimed Mr. Mitchel, as soon as he could make out anything in the room. Then

advancing, he leaned down and examined the object which had attracted his attention.

“Why, it is a woman!” he cried. “And she is hurt! There is blood here!”

“Blood!” cried Preacher Jim, aroused to a sudden state of excitement which astonished Mr. Mitchel. He brought the lamp, and stooping down turned the woman over, so that the dim light fell upon her face. Then with the enraged cry of a wild beast he jumped up, crying:

“It is my mother! My mother! She has been murdered! Murdered, I tell you! I will kill the man who did this. Do you hear? I will kill him! I will tear his heart out with these hands while it is yet warm! You think I could not, do you?”

He leaned over Mr. Mitchel menacingly, his eyes ablaze with fury, and it seemed that but a move, a word might make him vent his rage at once in some bloody act. But much of the danger was not even apprehended by Mr. Mitchel, for he was looking down, examining the woman, trying to find whether the beating of her heart had ceased. At this juncture, perhaps just in time to save himself from the effects of the temporary mania into which his companion had been plunged by the sight of his mother's blood, he looked up and said:

“She is not dead. Her heart beats!”

Preacher Jim was instantly transformed. He set down his lamp and dropped to the floor, where on his knees

he hastily felt for the heart's beating, and then placed his ear close, to hear its throb, meanwhile speaking hysterically.

"Not dead! Thank God! Let me see! Let me see! You might be lying to me! Where is the heart? There, I have it! I have it! Yes, yes, it is beating. Let me listen! Sh-h-h-h! Yes, I hear it! She's alive! Alive! We are in time! But that blood? Where does it come from? She is bleeding to death, man, don't you see! She is bleeding to death! It is dreadful to see your mother bleeding like that. What can we do?"

"She has fallen and struck her head," said Mr. Mitchell. "She has lost a great deal of blood and has fainted. That is all, I think. The wound is not bad, but it may need a few stitches. You go for a doctor, and I will take care of her while you are away. I have had some experience with wounds, and I promise you that your mother will be alive when you return. Hurry now and bring a doctor."

"A doctor? Yes, you are right. I will bring one. You say you can keep her alive until I return? That is your promise. Very good. I will hold you to it. Strictly, mind. If she dies I will hold you to account, and then—well—then you will know what it means to have Preacher Jim after you!"

With a wild laugh he rushed from the room, and could be heard going down the stairway in leaps.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STORY OF MARGARET CRANE.

AFTER Preacher Jim's departure, Mr. Mitchel bent down beside the woman, and was about to lift her up, with the intention of placing her upon the rude cot which served as a bed, when she moved feebly, groaned, and then called in low tones for water. He found some in a pitcher which boasted neither handle nor spout, and filled a tin cup which stood on a shelf. Raising the woman gently he placed the cup to her lips, and she swallowed a little water, which seemed to revive her, for she stretched out her hands and cried :

"Where am I? Where am I?"

"In your own home," replied Mr. Mitchel.

"Why is it so dark? Why don't you light the lamp?"

"The lamp is lighted. See! It is on the table."

"Then it's true! It's true! It all comes back to me." With these words she fell back, moaning and groaning, and it was some time before she could be made to speak again.

"What is true?" asked Mr. Mitchel. "What has happened to you?"

"I'll tell you! I'll tell you. Only help me up first."

Mr. Mitchel assisted her to rise, but she uttered a wild shriek of pain, which made him fear that she had suffered some internal injury, and therefore he quickly carried her over to the cot, and placed her in a recumbent position, that she might be at ease if possible. She rolled over and lay groaning for some minutes, but soon grew quiet again, and then asked for some more water.

"And just put a drop of whiskey in it," she added. "It braces me up when I feels bad. It's in the brown bottle."

The bottle was easily found on the shelf, and the draught did indeed add to her strength, for she would have risen again had not Mr. Mitchel prevented her.

"You must lie still, or the pain will come again," said he.

"Oh, yes! I forgot!" She was silent for a moment, then added wearily, "It don't matter. I'm dying anyway, so what's the odds."

"You are not going to die, my good woman," said Mr. Mitchel. "You must not have such notions. But tell me what happened to you?"

"I was up-stairs to see a neighbor, and coming down, I went blind all of a sudden——"

"You went blind?"

"Yes! My eyes have been bad for a long time, and

the sight just went from me. I guess it ain't coming back neither, for I'm blind now. But it won't matter for a day or two, if I live as long as that, which ain't likely."

"It is dreadful, of course, to lose one's sight, but why do you say that you are dying?"

"Because I am. That's why. When I lost my sight, I staggered like, and then I fell down the stairs, to the landing outside my own door. I managed to crawl in, but then the blood choked me, and I fainted, I guess."

"Why, what are you saying? How could the blood from your head choke you?"

"Yes, I know my head's cut too, but that ain't the main trouble. Something's broken inside of me, and a lot of blood came up into my mouth, and that's what choked me."

"Some small vessel, perhaps," said Mr. Mitchel reassuringly. "It emptied itself, and then the hemorrhage ceased. It has not come on again, which is a favorable symptom. We have sent for a doctor, and he will take proper care of you. Meanwhile, take some more whiskey. It will sustain you until he reaches here."

"I'll take the whiskey, because I like it, more's the pity. But it's not the doctor I want; it's a priest."

"Why do you want a priest?"

"Because I have something on my mind that must be told before I die. So bring a priest."

Mr. Mitchel could not resist the temptation to say :

"If you have anything to tell, confide it to me."

"Are you a priest?"

"No! But I am your son's friend."

"Then you are a crook, and no crook is ever a true friend."

"You are wrong. I am not a crook, I am a gentleman."

"Ha! Ha!" she laughed. "There are gentlemen crooks, and crooked gentlemen. If I could only see your face, I could tell. You couldn't fool old Mag. Wait! Give me your hands. So!" She took his proffered hand and felt it with both of hers, and then added: "As fine as silk. You're gentleman born anyway. I'll trust you. I must tell somebody, for I doubt if I'll live through the night. Besides, if Matthew came back, he'd stop me."

"Who is Matthew?"

"My son."

"But is not his name Jim? Preacher Jim."

"Yes! You are right. Jim, of course. I was thinking of something else. Now give me some more whiskey, and I'll tell you the story."

"Here it is. Take some from time to time. I suppose you are used to it?"

"Used to it? Why I've drunk enough in my time to swim in. And why not? When a good girl goes to the bad, she must either drown herself or her conscience. That's nature."

"Then you mean that such was your misfortune?"

“ You wait now ! Don’t hurry me. I’ll tell it best my own way. You’ll see why I tell you when you’ve heard all. I was born in New England, no matter just where. It was on a farm, and my people were strict Puritans. Too strict, maybe ; leastways it proved so in my case. I was just wild after the boys, in an innocent sort of way, you know. While a child I wanted to play with them ; when I grew to be a girl, I wanted a sweetheart ; and when I came to be a woman, I longed for some one to love me. I wanted a lover like the men I had read about in books, the novels, that I had to steal out of the book-case, and read in the hay loft in the barn. For all that sort of thing, boys, sweethearts, lovers, and novels, my people kept from me as far as they could. So what wonder when I met a handsome city chap one day in the woods, that I found it easy to answer him when he spoke to me ? What wonder that when I heard his smooth, soft talk, I was charmed ? How easy it was for a simple country girl like me to be fooled by the sort of polished scamp that he was ? He made me promise to meet him again the next day, and I hardly slept that night for wishing that the sun would rise again. But this part of the story is awfully old. What’s the use of going over it again ? The days went by, and the summer flew past ! The nuts came, and the leaves turned, and at last my lover went away back to that great place, the city. Then my dream ended suddenly, and I prayed to God that my sin might not find

me out. That whatever I was in reality, I might still be able to pass among my people as the innocent Puritan maiden that they all thought me. The preachers tell us that our prayers will be heard in heaven, and answered ; but I guess that the prayers of the sinners are not recorded. At any rate, mine were either unheard or unheeded. And so, one dreadful night, I left my home and my people, and followed my lover to the great metropolis, to lose my own identity, and become first Margaret Crane, and finally Old Mag."

Mr. Mitchel listened attentively, and observed that, as the woman proceeded, the coarseness of both her manner and speech disappeared, and she spoke with more refinement. Evidently in the early days, she had been a cherished daughter, and the present roughnesses were but as scratches on a jewel. In thinking of her youth she returned to her old manner of speech. As she paused at this point, he gave her more to drink, and presently she resumed :

"There in the country I had thought that my lover was a paragon, a very hero. I believed all the boasting stories that he told me, and made a God of him in my heart. When I found him in the city, at first he passed me by as though he did not know me, and then suddenly changing his mind, came up to me, and pretended that he had not recognized me. He took me to a fine house, and gave me fine clothes. And he made me promises : all the promises that such men usually make to such

girls. None of these were kept. Not even the simple one of providing me with maintenance, for he soon tired of his pretty country girl, and left me to care for myself as best I might. But I did not begin this, to talk about myself. What wrong I did to myself, I have suffered for. I have suffered so much that I have no fear of punishment hereafter. If there is a God, he will have pity, for he must be just. If there is no God, then death is the common end of all, saint and sinner alike. But the wrong that I did to my child. That is the great thing to think of now, as I have thought of it these many years."

"And what was that?"

"What greater wrong can woman do to man, than to bring him into the world, without a name? Ah! You can think of none? Well, let me tell you that there is a greater, deeper, wrong than even that. It is to bequeath to him the heritage of sin and crime! That I have done!"

Mr. Mitchel now found the story increasing in interest. Preacher Jim was a study which had attracted him more than he would have believed possible. Now that he was to be enlightened as to the man's heredity, he was doubly attentive, and hoped that the woman's strength would hold out to the end of her narrative.

"The sin is handed down to him from both of his parents, for in a case like this, the woman must be culpable as well as the man, though Heaven knows that if

innocence and ignorance can ever be a good plea, then I might hold myself guiltless. The crime is from his father, who was a beast. Remember what I tell you, and mark it as the truth. He was a beast. A cruel, selfish beast."

"In what way did you learn this? Was he brutal in his treatment of you? Did he offer you violence?"

"He would have, had he dared, but he was a coward and afraid to rouse me too far. Some men bluntly tell a woman—'I have grown tired of you. All is over between us. Good bye.' These are brutes, but they are not cowards. My lover was a cunning schemer, and he plotted to make me so disgusted with him, that I should myself sever our acquaintance. In this he succeeded. He told me tales, that made me look upon him with loathing, so that I grew to hate myself for having loved him. Was not that the cruelty of a demon?"

"Tell me something of these dreadful tales, if you can remember any?"

"Remember any? I have forgotten none. They have been the spectres of my sleepless nights, and the terrors of my drunken sleep, a thousand times. He told me how he loved to see suffering. How he would visit slaughter pens, to hear the poor animals shriek in death; he claimed that once he had chopped a boy's finger off with a hatchet, for the fun of seeing it jump from the force of the blow. Many, many other stories of the kind, I was forced to hear, but there is one, which

I have lived over in hundreds of dreadful dreams. There was once a murder trial which was the great sensation of the time. He was then only twelve years of age. Bear that in mind. He read all the accounts of the trial, and gloated over the horrible details. The man was convicted and hanged, and he tried to see the execution, but in that he was thwarted. But his lust for blood was bound to be appeased. One day, he summoned some schoolmates, all younger than himself, and took them down into the cellar of his house, locking the door, that none might leave. Here he showed them a poor little harmless monkey, which he charged with having killed its mate. Then he proclaimed himself judge, appointed a boy to be District Attorney, and another to be the lawyer for the monkey. The others were formed into a jury. The boys looking upon the proceeding as sport, entered into the spirit of the play, and a form of trial was enacted, the verdict being against the poor animal. The judge immediately sentenced it to be hanged. At this the boys thought that the play was over, and wished to leave the cellar, but this cruel devil, refused to open the door for them, and he being larger and stronger than the others, they were all afraid to insist, but huddled together with affrighted faces looking on, at what followed. Next, this self-appointed judge declared himself to be the sheriff, and forthwith proceeded with the execution of the sentence."

"You do not mean——" cried Mr. Mitchel, and then stopped, in horror at the thought.

"Yes! He hanged that poor little defenceless monkey. Hanged that animal, which so resembled a human being. Hanged it in sport, and laughed at its death struggles. And that boy grew to be a man, and that man, God pity me, was the father of my child."

She had risen up on her elbow as she reached the climax of her tale, and spoke with a bitterness, which told of the torture that this one thought had been to her for so many years. Now she fell back exhausted, and then gave a low cry of pain, as blood gushed forth from her mouth. Mr. Mitchel hastily washed this away, and was glad to see that no more followed the first flow. He poured out some whiskey, this time not mixing it with water, and made her swallow it. She lay still for some time, gazing stolidly up, with her sightless eyes, but presently made a sign that she wished to speak again. Mr. Mitchel tried to dissuade her, fearing a fatal result if she should further exert herself, but she insisted upon having her will, so he stooped over her, bidding her to speak low, that she might not tire herself unnecessarily.

"All right," she said, almost in a whisper. "I'll go easy. But I ain't finished yet. You said you was Jim's friend. Well, I'm dreadful afraid for him." She had now relapsed into her coarser manner of speech.

"Why need you fear for him?" asked Mr. Mitchel. "Jim can take care of himself."

“Yes ! Jim ’s clever, and it ’ll be a fly cop as ’ll take him. But they all get pinched some day. I should n’t mind if it was only for a burglary, or something like that. But I think of that monkey, and when I dream of it, often the monkey changes, and it ’s Jim as is hanging there. My Jim ! My own boy, hanging by the neck ! Oh ! No ! No ! God in heaven, if there is one, hear a poor dying woman’s prayer, and don’t let my boy come to that ! Save him ! Save him !”

“Come ! Come ! This is merely a nightmare ! You have nothing of that sort to fear. Why should you think of such a dreadful thing ?”

“Ah ! I ’ve thought of it, and thought of it, many ’s the long night through. I ’ve worked it all out, so natural that sometimes I think it ’s fate, and must come true.”

“But why ?”

“Listen ! Suppose Jim was ever to find out who his father is ? He ’s alive yet, and lives in this town. I know, because I seen him myself not a month ago. He ’s the same beast he always was, too, ’cause I seen him look about sly like, and when he thought nobody was watching, he kicked a little child that was lying on the pavement, and when it screamed, he laughed and walked away. Now suppose my Jim had seen that, and had known the man for his father ? Do you know what ? Jim would have been at his throat like a tiger, and would have strangled him to death. Would n’t it be awful for my Jim to hang, for killing a beast like his father ?”

“Ah, but he does not know who his father is, does he?”

“Now we come to it. Now you ’ll see why I ’ve told you all this yarn. Jim don’t know, now. Leastways I ’ve never told him. But there ’s papers as would tell him, if he found them after I ’m gone. Papers I ought to have burnt long ago, but I never had the heart. I ’ve lit a fire special to do it, then I would think I ’d just read them over once more, and in the end I ’d tie them up and put them away again.”

“And where are these papers?”

“I ’ll tell you. I want you to take them, to keep them away from Jim, and yet to keep them for Jim, too.”

“How do you mean, for Jim?”

“Why, don’t you see, if the worst come to worst, why you could, maybe, show them papers to the judge, and tell him as how Jim could n’t help it. That he was a born criminal, and that the very man he killed brought him into the world with the brand of Cain on him. That would count, would n’t it?” It ought to, don’t you think? No judge would have the heart to hang my Jim after that, would he? No! The papers ’ll save him. The papers ’ll save him. You take the papers. There in that old box on the shelf there. Jim thinks it ’s my work-box, ’cause there ’s needles and thread on top. But the papers is on the bottom all right. You find them, don’t you? You ’ve got them all right? You ’ll keep them to save Jim with, won’t you? I ’m dying, and you

would n't betray an old woman like me, would you? You 'll—look—out—for Jim?"

Mr. Mitchel had gone to the shelf and opened the box, and as she heard him rummaging through the miscellaneous lot of trash, her anxiety had grown, so that she had raised herself up in bed, and, forgetful of her blindness, was gazing towards him, while her words flowed fast and feverishly, until at last she was forced to stop because of another gush of blood from her mouth. Mr. Mitchel had just found the papers, when he heard her groan as she sank back on the cot. One glance showed him that she was now in a desperate condition, and thrusting the packet into his breast pocket, he hastened to her assistance.

At this opportune moment the door burst open and Preacher Jim rushed in, followed by the doctor.

"Is she alive?" cried Preacher Jim, rushing up and falling to his knees besides his mother. "My God, where does all that blood come from?"

"She has been doing very well, until just a moment ago," said Mr. Mitchel, "when this hemorrhage came on." Then rising, he addressed the doctor. "She tells me, doctor, that she became suddenly blind, and fell on the stairs. She thinks she has injured herself internally, and stated that she had a flow of blood from the mouth before her son and myself came in. I fear this is a serious case."

"I will examine and see," said the doctor. "But first we must stop this blood."

He prepared some medicine, which he poured into the woman's mouth, and in a few minutes she was comparatively at ease again, the hemorrhage having been controlled. Then the doctor proceeded to make a thorough examination.

"I am afraid that a rib is broken," said he ; "and that it either impinges on the lung, or else that there is a ruptured vessel. My advice is that she be removed to the hospital as soon as possible."

"If you would prefer," said Mr. Mitchel, speaking to Preacher Jim, who was now standing by, gazing at his mother with jaws firmly set, and all the muscles of his body at a tension, "I will have your mother taken to my house, where no expense shall be spared in the endeavor to save her life. What do you say?"

Preacher Jim made no reply, but the doctor said :

"The hospital will be infinitely the best place for her. If you choose to pay for her attendance, why, of course, you may do so. But charity patients are treated with the same care and skill, at our institution, as are the wealthiest."

"I am sure of it, doctor," said Mr. Mitchel, courteously. "I was merely anxious to consult the son's wishes in the matter. What do you say, Jim?"

Mr. Mitchel touched Preacher Jim on the arm before he appeared to notice. Then he growled out :

"What does it matter where she dies? She's dying,

that is plain enough. Do as you like, only make her comfortable. That is all that I ask."

With these words, he turned and went to the window, where he stood staring out, until the ambulance had been summoned, and the men were carrying the woman down the steep stairway as tenderly as possible. As Mr. Mitchel was about to follow, he turned and spoke to Preacher Jim.

"Will you not come with us?" said he.

"Yes!" he replied, then clutching Mr. Mitchel's sleeve, he detained him a moment. "You were born under a lucky star, Mr. Mitchel. You promised that my mother would be alive on my return. I see now that she might have died through no fault of yours. Had it been so, I think that one of my fits would have come upon me, and then—then your life would have been the forfeit, that's all. I am glad you were able to keep your promise. Glad for your sake, and my own."

"I made you another promise, which I will also keep. You shall never regret having left me with your mother. I am your friend!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERY OF THE WILL.

WHEN Mr. Mitchel reached his own home on that evening it was nine o'clock, and he was surprised to find Slippery Sam awaiting him. The fellow was sitting patiently in the hall.

"Why, hullo!" exclaimed Mr. Mitchel, recognizing him. "You here? I did not expect to see you?"

"You did n't expect to see me?"

"No!"

"Why not? Did n't I give you my word I'd be here?"

"You did, but I supposed you had changed your mind since we parted."

"Changed my mind? Say, what are you givin' me anyway? Changed my mind? You're talkin' Greek to me. Make it easy. I ain't on. What's the reason I changed my mind?"

"Look here, Slippery Sam, you cannot play any double game with me, my man. Understand that at once."

"Who's playin' double? Not Slippery Sam. Not on your life. That ain't his sort. Look here, Mr. Mitchel,

we 're talkin' cross. Let me give you my side of it straight, and then you give me your'n. I meet you quite by chance on Essex Street this mornin' and you hails me. You admit that? You called me over to you, I did n't intrude on you. Am I right?"

"Yes."

"Good. Now we 'll reach it. You mentions to me in the most businesslike way that you 've got a job on, and asks if I 've got time to lend a hand. Just as if time was n't my stock in trade, as it were. Of course, I admits that I 've got time to burn. You says to me, says you, confidential like, 'Sam, says you, 'there 's a woman in that house across the way that I want watched.' Then I answers you, and I says, says I, 'I 'm the best dog in the district. I 'll watch anything and run it to earth.' Then you tell me it 's worth a hundred, if I carry out orders, and I make a mental note to myself that the money 's as good as mine. You says to me, says you, 'Sam,' you says, 'there 's a woman in that house and she 's likely to change her address to-day. When she leaves I want you to track her.' 'To the end of the earth,' says I. 'Very good,' says you, 'there 's a cab around the corner. Take this card and the driver will obey your orders. The woman is likely to leave in a carriage, and I 'll give you the signal to follow her. You find out where she moves to, and you will earn the money, and my gratitude besides.' 'Right you are, Mister,' says I, 'I 'll be at your house at eight o'clock

as near as I can manage, and I'll be ready for that hundred.' Now, there you are. That's what passed between us, and you could cross-examine me all day, and I'd stick to the story. How does it strike you?"

"Your memory is very accurate," replied Mr. Mitchel. "But when you agreed to enter my service you did not tell me that you were under the necessity of obeying the orders of others, or I would have engaged a different agent. That is what I mean by double dealing."

"Come again, Mister. I don't twig you yet. What orders do you mean?"

"You need not play the innocent with me. I know what happened since you left me."

"Oh, you do! You're a bird, you are! Did you soar up into the sky and keep an eye on yours truly?"

"Come, no insolence, or I will kick you out into the street."

"No offense meant, on my honor. I'm only curious as to how you could know what happened after we parted. You didn't follow me, that's sure."

"Your cab was stopped at the Bowery by the driver of the carriage which you were following, and he left his vehicle to speak to you. You recognized him as a crook, and he informed you that you were to give up tracking him, which order you obeyed."

"Well, on my life, you're a wonder, and no mistake. You've got that as straight as a die, all but the last deal. How did you get on?"

"That is immaterial. What do you mean when you say that I am right 'all but the last deal.'"

"I mean, Mr. Mitchel, that I did n't obey that order. I did n't drop the scent. That 's what I mean."

"Don't imagine that you can trifle with me, my man. You cannot invent a story which I will accept, and pay money for. Before you get that money you must earn it. It will not suffice to tell me an address. I must go there and find the woman, before I settle with you."

"So, that 's the new deal is it? That was n't on the cards this mornin'. I was to give you the address to-night, and you was to hand over the long green. But now you 've got a notion that you can't afford to trust Slippery Sam. You ain't willing to pay for the address?"

"Not after what has occurred. I must find the woman first."

"There 's no altering that I suppose?"

"No! That is the best I will do."

"You 're wrong, Mister. You 'll do better than that. A good deal better. I 've acted on the level with you. I 've risked my neck to keep my word with you. I got word to drop the job, and I chose to go ahead. I made believe go down town, and I doubled on my tracks, and kept that carriage in sight till I saw the woman get out. I dogged her to where she is, and where I can lay my hands on her any minute. That 's what I done, to keep my word, but now you say my word ain't good enough.

All right. That 's your privilege, but it 's a jar on my feelin's and when my feelin's get hurt, I 'm a hard man to make terms with."

"Oh, come to the point! I am tired and wish to go to bed. What are you driving at?"

"Well, to put it in a few words, and make it plain, you want to find the girl. Correct. I 'll be here any time to-morrow you name, and I 'll take you to her. How does that strike you?"

"Be here at ten o'clock to-morrow, and take me to the woman, and I will hand you a crisp hundred-dollar bill."

"Not on your life you won't. You 'll pass over two crisp hundreds, or I 'll drop the job."

"Do you think you can bunco me, you fool."

"It 's not bunco, and I 'm no fool, neither. You made the offer, and I carried out the agreement, but now you 've backed down. That ends the first transaction. Now it 's my turn to make the terms. I 've got information that you want. If it ain't worth two hundred to you, why you 'd be a fool to invest. You judge for yourself, but there ain't no compulsion. You take it or leave it, and I ain't sure but I 'm safer if I wash my hands of the whole thing. I 've gone back on my pals for you, and I don't know who I 'm up against. I may be workin' against some of the small fry, or I may be crossin' one of the most dangerous of the gang. The driver would n't give me the straight tip. So far, I 'm

safe, because I ain't told you nothin'. If I take you to that woman, I may be a dead man in twenty-four hours. You don't know the crowd, like I do."

Slippery Sam spoke so earnestly that his words carried conviction to Mr. Mitchel's mind. He saw, now when it was too late, that he had made a mistake in mistrusting the fellow. Had he not done so, he believed that the correct address of the woman would have been supplied to him. He decided to conciliate Slippery Sam if possible.

"Look here, Sam," said he. "I am sorry that I doubted you, and——"

"Your sorrow don't weigh much, I reckon."

"And I confess that I was wrong," continued Mr. Mitchel, ignoring the interruption. "But you must admit that when I learned what I did from Preacher Jim, I——"

"Preacher Jim?" cried Slippery Sam, truly alarmed. "So he told you, did he? He's mixed up in this? He sent out the order to head me off, did he?"

When Mr. Mitchel observed the effect that this name had upon the man, he bit his lip with vexation at the slip which he had made, and hastened to repair if possible the damage which had been done.

"No! No!" he said, "Preacher Jim, merely happened to be at the rooms of your Society, when the driver was sent out, and by the merest accident knew about it."

"I don't swallow that too quick," replied Slippery Sam.

"Let me explain the whole matter to you. This woman is supposed to be secretly married to a wealthy young man up town. It has just been discovered and he hastened to remove her from the house, in order that her identity might not be known. It was he who sent the carriage to take her away. I suspected that he would make this move, and that is why I was there. Do you comprehend."

"Then this fellow is a crook? Otherwise he would not go to our place for help?"

"I am not sure about that, but it was his man who went, and Preacher Jim admitted that this servant is a crook."

"What is his name?"

"I do not know."

"You don't know, and you're workin' on the job? That's odd." It was evident that Sam's suspicions were aroused. "Well, then, what's the name of the main guy?"

"The what?"

"The chief! The master! The rich young sprig up town?"

Mr. Mitchel concluded that circumlocution would be useless, so replied frankly.

"His name is Matthew Mora."

The effect upon Slippery Sam was electrical. He

started back and supported himself against the wall, to save himself from falling.

"Not young Mora the son of—of—of the old man who was mur—that is to say, killed?" he stammered.

"The same!" replied Mr. Mitchel, regarding the man closely, astonished at the effect which he had produced.

"And the woman—the woman you made me follow—what was—what was her name?"

"Mora went by the name Morton in the Essex Street house. So did this woman."

"Morton? Morton?" repeated Slippery Sam in a dazed way. "And I was fool enough to follow her—against orders, too. Here—I throw up the job. Keep your money. Let me out of here. Let me out, quick."

But Mr. Mitchel stood between the man and the door, and rejoined:

"One more question first."

"Well, what is it? Maybe I'll answer, and maybe I'll not. It all depends, now I see what lay you're on. But cut it short. I want to get out of this."

"I merely wish to know whether you are living in that house in Essex Street?"

"Yes! I'm livin' there. Now let me pass."

"How long have you lived there?"

"I've answered all the questions I'm goin' to. Let me pass!"

He was growing greatly excited, and his face was pale

with anger intermingled with fear. Mr. Mitchel, however, persisted.

“Not until you have answered my question.”

“I answered one, and I won’t answer any more. Let me by, or I’ll do you a hurt.”

He raised his left arm menacingly, but with the celerity born of the anticipation of some such movement, Mr. Mitchel seized the uplifted arm, and tried to hold it. But the fellow well deserved his *sobriquet*, Slippery, for with a swift movement he freed himself, and dodging under Mr. Mitchel’s arm, was at the door before he could be hindered. Mr. Mitchel started towards him, when suddenly he drew forth a dangerous looking, long-bladed knife, the point of which he presented towards his adversary, crying out :

“Stand back, or you are a dead man !”

Mr. Mitchel, taken entirely by surprise, hesitated for a moment as to what he should do, and in that moment Slippery Sam succeeded in turning the knob of the door with his other hand, and a second later he had opened the door and passed out. Mr. Mitchel sprang after him, and went out upon the stoop, only to see the fellow running off in the darkness. He stood looking after him, realizing the utter uselessness of following, and pondered over the strange occurrence.

What did Slippery Sam know of the Mora murder, and of this woman, that he should be so frightened when he learned that Mr. Mitchel was interested in the affair ?

Mr. Mitchel had just asked himself this question, when he thought he heard angry voices, and then a sound as of men struggling, coming from the direction in which Slippery Sam had run off. He went down a step or two, and leaned forward listening, when he was thoroughly startled to hear a piercing shriek, followed by the sound of feet rapidly receding. Without returning to the house for his hat, he ran rapidly down the street, determined to investigate the matter. Less than a hundred yards away, he came upon the body of a man lying beneath a street lamp, his head in a pool of blood. Turning him over so that he could see the face, he was horrified to discover that it was Slippery Sam.

As Mr. Mitchel bent over him, he opened his eyes and looked up, an expression of deep agony on his countenance. Evidently he recognized Mr. Mitchel, for he attempted to speak, but after one or two vain efforts, his utterances were completely shut off by a rush of blood from his mouth. With one last effort, he placed his hand to his side, where he had been stabbed, and then rolled over unconscious. Mr. Mitchel noticed a knife upon the pavement, and picking it up, was sure that it was the same with which the man had threatened him. Could this be suicide? Impossible, for he had plainly heard a man running off, besides the sound of a struggle.

This was destined to be a night of surprises to Mr. Mitchel, for just at this critical moment Mr. Barnes came up, and stood staring at the scene before him.

"What is this?" asked the detective.

"This is murder, I believe," replied Mr. Mitchel.

"Murder!" ejaculated Mr. Barnes, not at once comprehending what was meant.

"Yes. That is Slippery Sam. He is either dying or dead. Help me to lift him into my house, and I will explain more fully."

Between them they carried the bleeding man into the house, whereupon Mr. Mitchel requested Mr. Barnes to call the nearest physician, and while the detective was gone, he did what he could to staunch the blood. Very shortly after, Mr. Barnes returned with the doctor, who, after examining the wound, declared that nothing could be done, and within half an hour the unfortunate crook had breathed his last.

Left alone with Mr. Barnes, Mr. Mitchel related all that had passed between himself and Slippery Sam, and expressed the opinion that his death was a misfortune, since he evidently knew something of the Mora affair, which in time they might have extracted from him.

"Yes, indeed," said Mr. Barnes. "This is perhaps a serious obstacle in our path. For one or two things is evident. Either this man has been 'put out of the way' because of what he knows, or else he was the guilty man himself."

"I do not quite follow that last deduction?" said Mr. Mitchel.

"Oh! I mean," said Mr. Barnes, "that either this

murder has, or has not a connection with the Mora affair. If it has, then the true murderer may have been at work here, disposing of a dangerous witness. If it has not, that is to say if this killing is entirely apart from the other, then we must consider the man's fright, when he learned of your interest in the Mora murder. I account for it by the possible supposition that he was the guilty party."

"How readily you abandon your beautiful theories about young Mora," said Mr. Mitchel.

"Not at all. I only say that this last theory is possible. I think it highly improbable. Yet we must not overlook the fact that this man had the opportunity to commit the crime."

"How so?"

"One theory, advanced I think by Preacher Jim, to you, was that the murderer may have been any regular criminal, who first stole the will to be used as an instrument of blackmail, and then killed old Mora to make the will operative."

"Yes! That was one theory. Go on!"

"Then we know that the murderer wore a certain suit of clothes, which was possibly taken from the Essex Street house and subsequently returned."

"I follow you! Proceed!"

"Well, Slippery Sam, according to Preacher Jim, and by his own admission, lived in that Essex Street house. Therefore I say he had the opportunity."

"Very well argued Mr. Barnes. It is worth looking into, when we have more time. But our first duty is to get this corpse out of my house. I wish you would relieve me, by notifying the authorities. Will you?"

"Certainly! I am at your service and will go at once. But before I go, let me tell you something. It was a most fortunate impulse which led me towards your house to-night."

"Undoubtedly since you may be of great assistance to me. But why did you come?"

"You left my place this afternoon in company with Preacher Jim. Since then I have heard that his old mother has met with an accident, breaking a rib, and was taken to a hospital."

"Yes!"

"She died an hour ago."

"So, the old woman is dead. Does the son know?"

"He was with her, but as soon as she had ceased to breathe, he hurriedly left the building, apparently in a great state of excitement. When the news reached me, I could not quite put aside a feeling of anxiety for you. I believe the fellow is half mad, if not entirely so, and I thought it would be best for you to know what had happened."

"I am much indebted to you for your thoughtfulness. But tell me what you meant by saying that it was fortunate that you came here to-night."

"Well, you will admit that it was a strange scene which I witnessed. You were standing over a dying man, holding a blood-stained knife in your hands."

"A most compromising situation truly. The heroes of melodrama have been condemned on similar circumstantial evidence."

"True, and when I went out for the doctor, I passed the spot again, and then I found this."

He handed a small article to Mr. Mitchel, who examined it and then remarked :

"My match box, bearing my monogram. You are my good angel truly. You remove all evidence against me. But, jesting aside, I am glad to have this. It might have been difficult to make others believe that I had dropped it."

"So I thought, yet see how unreliable, is circumstantial evidence, at times."

"You are quite right. Yet the mistakes arise not from the evidence itself, but from the mis-interpretation thereof. One of your own axioms I believe. Now let me thank you once more, and will you hurry about the removal of this body."

Mr. Barnes hastened to comply with this request, and Mr. Mitchel, left alone with the corpse, immediately began to search it. A moment later he drew forth from the pocket of the trousers a long folded envelope, which he eagerly carried to the light that he might examine it. Taking out the paper which the envelope inclosed, he

uttered an ejaculation of pleasure. He held in his hand the will of Matthew Mora.

“Let me see,” thought Mr. Mitchel, “we found the pocket of the trousers of the plaid suit, stained with blood only on one side, from which we argued that the murderer might have thrust the will into that pocket when leaving the house. I think Mr. Barnes advanced the theory, that in such an event, the will would be blood-stained on one side. Nothing could be more complete. Here is Matthew Mora’s will, with one side, as it is folded, quite considerably stained with blood.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY.

THE death of Slippery Sam attracted but little attention. The newspapers announced that, "the body of a criminal well known to the police, was found last night in the street. He was known as Slippery Sam, and a knife-thrust in the heart seemed to indicate murder, but the guilty party has so far eluded arrest, and there seems no likelihood of his discovery, as the police have absolutely no clue to his identity." That was all, and this meagre paragraph finished out a two column article, devoted to the unsavory details of a divorce case between parties whose names had been previously unknown to the general public.

To Mr. Mitchel, however, the man's death meant a great deal. He had rather liked Slippery Sam, despite his career, for he had found him a genial and rather interesting companion. Besides, he believed that Sam had really meant to serve him, and had succeeded in tracking the woman from Essex Street to her new abode, and that in doing this against the orders of his associates he had risked his life, which now it seemed he had lost, as the penalty of disobedience. Lastly, the

discovery of the will upon his person had almost completely overturned his own theories about the Mora murder. Therefore, from every point of view, it seemed unfortunate that the man had been cut off without a chance to make explanations, which might have greatly cleared up matters.

However, Mr. Mitchel was a man of resources, and not likely to abandon an investigation because he encountered obstacles. Therefore, on the morning following the day on which Slippery Sam's body was found, he set out to put into execution a plan which he had decided upon after a night devoted more to reflection than to sleep. He was determined, at any cost, to find this young actress who called herself "The Lily of the Valley." Notwithstanding the youthfulness of her appearance, judging from her photograph, as well as from the statements of Preacher Jim, he still considered that the embroidery on the infant's garment, which he had found, was a link which undoubtedly connected this girl with the mystery which he was endeavoring to solve.

It was ten o'clock when he arrived at Apollo Hall and began a conversation with the barkeeper, who readily remembered him.

"Glad to meet you again," said that dispenser of liquid refreshments. "By the way, what did you say was your name, the other day? I've got the worst sort of memory for names, but on faces I never get left. I knew you the minute I saw your shadow on the floor."

Mr. Mitchel knew that he had given no name on his former visit, but he was anxious not to lose the fellow's confidence by seeming to hesitate, and therefore he replied frankly :

"My name is Mitchel. I want to have a talk with you confidentially. May I?"

The word "confidentially" was very adroitly used, for the lower social circles enjoy nothing so much as "confidential relations" with their superiors. A secret shared in common forms a tie that breeds equality. The bar-keeper lowered his voice in replying, and looked very knowing.

"Lean forward so the fellow by the window there can't hear you, and fire away," said he. "Mum's the word with me, and I'm loyal down to the ground. So let her go!"

"Well, the fact is, I wish to look up the men who swore to Mora's alibi. I think you told me that you know them?"

"Know 'em? Well! If I don't, nobody does. So you've taken my tip, eh?"

"I don't exactly follow you!"

"Oh, I guess you do. I sort of dropped a hint that money would buy them chaps, did n't I?"

"Oh, yes! I understand now. Yes! You are right! I have been thinking over your words, and I have come to the conclusion that the alibi was pre-arranged. You see Mora had no chance to see these men after the

murder was discovered, so I guess that he taught them their parts beforehand."

"Say! You told me the other day that you ain't no detective. But I swear you ought to be. You're fly, you are. You twig the racket dead to rights."

"Thank you. Now the point is just this. A man who will lie for money, will also tell the truth for cash."

"Right you are, if there's enough in it to tempt him. I see your game."

"Now I think I told you that I am connected with the press? Well, my paper is determined to go to the bottom of this affair, and they don't mind what it costs to get the true story. What I want you to do, is to find one of these men, and give me a chance to pump him. If I should succeed, I would n't be surprised if there might be a fifty-dollar bill in it for you up at the office."

"Oh, I'll do a friend a favor without pay," said the barkeeper in a deprecatory tone, but with a greedy look which plainly showed that Mr. Mitchel had played a trump card.

"I tell you what you do," he went on after a moment, "Rogers is the man you want. He'll go down in the dirt and let you walk all over him, for a fiver. A man like that would n't stop long to think, if you held boodle under his nose."

"Where can I find him?"

"Rogers is always in one of three places—here, at his home asleep, or in jail."

"And where is he now?"

"He's the man by the window, and he seems to be asleep, but that's an old bluff of his. He's watchin' us, because we're talkin' low. You go into that room to the left, and I'll send him in. Then you work him."

Mr. Mitchel obeyed instructions and was soon followed by as ill-smelling a specimen of beer-drinking humanity as he had ever encountered.

"Your name is Rogers, I believe," said Mr. Mitchel, wishing to make the interview as short as possible.

"Good guess," replied the man.

"I wish to ask you a few questions."

"Sorry I can't answer you, but my throat is too dry."

Then he uttered a couple of hoarse rasping sounds which were very suggestive. Mr. Mitchel was disgusted to find himself obliged to deal with such a beast of a man, but ordered a drink for him, which he eagerly disposed of.

"Can you talk better now?" asked Mr. Mitchel, sarcastically.

"Much better, thanks, but better fill her up again. I might get dry any minute. It's constitutional with me. No cure for it, except drinkin'."

"You shall have enough to drown yourself in, if you only give me your attention. You were a witness lately for Mr. Mora."

"Yes !"

"You swore that he was in this hall at the time when it was supposed that his father was killed ?"

"That 's what I took oath to !"

"Mora paid you for that service."

"Good guess. He gave me a tenner."

"So ! You admit then that you swore to a lie ?"

"No, Mister, you 're wrong. I told the truth that day. First time in years, but luck was with me you see."

"No, I do not see. What do you mean ?"

"Why, I mean I was offered money to tell the truth, and that 's a snap, ain't it ?"

"Then you still insist that Mora was down here until after midnight ?"

"It 's the truth ; that 's all I can say."

"Then this time you are not so lucky as you thought you were."

"How so ?"

"Why because if you had been lying before, you could earn a lot of money now by telling the truth."

"You mean by swearin' that Mora was n't here that night ?"

"Yes."

"How much could I get for that ?"

"Oh, say a hundred dollars."

"Done ! I 'm your man !"

"Oh, then you would be willing to swear that he was not here after midnight ?"

"For a hundred, I would!"

"But, as a matter of fact, was he here, or was he not? What is the truth?"

"I told you he was here, did n't I? That's a fact, but that don't cut no figure with me. I'll swear the other way, and all the lawyers in town would n't confuse me, or trip me up."

"I guess that is true. You have been well drilled in your part, and well paid too."

"What do you mean? I ain't on."

"I mean that you lied on the witness stand, and that you are adhering to your story now."

"You're hard to please, Mister. But I ain't easy to offend. I'll swear either way you like. There, that's fair enough, ain't it?"

"Look here! Let me make myself clear. What I want is the truth. I will pay for that, whatever it is. But when you admit that you are such a liar, how am I to believe what you tell me?"

"That's so, Mister. You've got me there. I don't know why you should. But what can I do to help you out?"

"I cannot take your word unsupported. You tell me that Mora was here late that night. There was a dance going on, was there not?"

"A regular hummer."

"Did Mora dance with any of the women?"

"Why sure! You don't take him for a wall-flower, do you?"

"I have been told that the best dancer here that night was a girl called Lilian Vale."

This assertion was made merely to watch its effect, and upon the chance that it might be true, since the bar-keeper had told him that the girl frequented the hall, and had expressed her intention to be at the opening *soirée* on the following night. This Mr. Mitchel doubted, but he had determined that in case he should fail to find her before then, he would be present himself.

"Yes, she was here," said Rogers.

"Did Mora dance with her?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"No," replied Rogers, "I don't think he danced with her. Leastways, I did n't see him. But then I was n't on the watch all the time, not being a dancin' man myself, but more in the drinkin' line. Which just reminds me, my throat is parched again. You must excuse my mentionin' it, but I ain't talked so long on a stretch in years."

More beer was ordered, and Mr. Mitchel followed up his advantage.

"You say he did not dance with this girl. Then of course you know her?"

"Know the Lily? Well I should smile! Since she was so high," indicating a stature so low, that he must have known her at birth, if he were correct.

"Does she know Mora?"

"That 's more than I can tell you."

"Well, do you know where she can be found at present?"

"I don't know where she 's livin', but I can find her for you, if there 's any money in it," the last part of the sentence added slyly.

"Oh, have no fear. You will be well paid. How soon can you find this girl?"

"By this afternoon, I reckon. You see I know a woman as knows her well. Sort o' brought her up, as you might say. But they don't live together now, cause the old woman took to gin. But the girl makes it a point to see her two or three times a week, so I 've only got to find out what time she 's expected, and you could lay round till she shows up ; and there you are, as neat as wax."

The proposition seemed to be a good one, for even though this girl and the mysterious Mrs. Morton might be the same person, still her change of residence would in no way prevent her from visiting her old foster-mother. Besides, now that he had heard of this elder woman, Mr. Mitchel was more than ever pleased, for while he might have difficulty with the girl, it would be comparatively easy to extract information from the old woman, who could be made garrulous if a little liquor were wisely administered.

"Very well, Rogers," said Mr. Mitchel, "the sooner you find out about this the better. Suppose you visit the old woman at once, and I will go with you."

"One time 's the same as another with me," replied the old sot, and the two men left the room. As they were about to pass the bar, Rogers slyly remarked :

"Did you speak? Yes? Thanks! Gi' me a whiskey-straight, Jack," with which he leaned against the bar with the air of an old habitu  .

Mr. Mitchel handed a fifty-dollar note to the barkeeper and told him that he might keep the change, which the man did. Then Mr. Mitchel followed Rogers out of the place, and uptown, to a dingy looking house in Henry Street, where Rogers stopped, remarking :

"P'raps I 'd better go up first and see how the land lays, eh? The old party may be drunk, and not receivin' visitors."

"Very well," said Mr. Mitchel, "but hurry back."

This injunction was obeyed, for within ten minutes Rogers was downstairs again, apparently excited.

"Say, Mister," said he, "you 've struck it rich. The old woman 's sober, and the girl 's with her. Go right up. Second floor front, right side. An' if you don't need me any more, why——"

"I can settle, eh?" said Mr. Mitchel finishing his sentence for him. "Here is some money for you. Good day."

"Right you are, Mister. You know my address, Apollo Hall. Office hours from 8 A.M. to 10 P.M.—Ta-ta!" and he shuffled off, holding himself a little more erect, because of the money in his pocket.

Mr. Mitchel hesitated for a moment, wondering how best to effect his object. He had not expected to find the girl at this house, and he would have preferred to

have a talk first with the old woman alone. But now that the girl was so near at hand, the opportunity of meeting her should not be lost. He had learned from Rogers, that the name of the old woman was Susan Cooper ; that she had been married at one time to a soldier ; and that she was living upon a government pension. She was never sober, except when short of money, and this was usually near the end of the quarter, during the last weeks of which she did odd jobs, when she could get work, and so managed until the next pay-day.

Mr. Mitchel very quickly decided to pretend that his business was with Mrs. Cooper, so that the girl need not be warned of his wish to meet her. He ascended the rickety stairway, in the darkness, feeling his way with outstretched arms, and knocked at the door of the old woman's room.

"Come in," cried a voice within, no effort being made to ascertain who the visitor might be.

Mr. Mitchel entered, and found himself in the presence of both women, or as he would have said from his first glance, of a woman and a child. He easily recognized Lilian Vale, although she was older than she looked in her photograph. Yet she seemed more like a child than a woman. He recalled to mind the hearty laugh, with which Preacher Jim had greeted his suspicions in regard to this girl, and now that he saw her, he was compelled to admit that there was reason for the criminal's amusement. Nevertheless, when Mr. Mitchel

had once reached a conclusion by logical deduction, he was tenacious of his opinion until confronted with most convincing proof that he was in error. The coincidence of this girl's stage name, and the flower embroidered upon the infant's garment, needed explanation. He could not accept it as a mere chance. Compelled to account for his intrusion, he addressed himself to Mrs. Cooper, saying :

"Your name is Susan Cooper, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am connected with a firm of lawyers who make a specialty of collecting pension claims."

"Thank you. I don't need any lawyers. My pension is paid very regular," said the old woman, a little suspicious. Mr. Mitchel hastened to reassure her.

"Yes, yes, of course, Madam. That we know. But that only applies to the regular pension. I came to see you about the amount properly due you for the time before your claim was allowed."

"I never heard of any back money due me."

"Exactly so, Madam. But you see we lawyers look into these things pretty thoroughly. Now we hunted up a lot of these claims, and we have worked on them, till I am happy to say that we have had them recognized, and what is better still, they have been paid."

"Then you mean there's money comin' to me?" asked the old woman, eagerly.

"Let me see," said Mr. Mitchel, pretending to consult

a memorandum book. "Yes! Ah, here it is. Mrs. Susan Cooper, two hundred and eight, seventy-five. The odd figures occur, because of the deductions for costs of collection."

"You mean I'm to get over two hundred dollars?" cried Mrs. Cooper, now greatly excited.

"That's what the gent said, Mum," interjected the girl, speaking for the first time. "Sit down. Don't hop up, soon as you hear of a little money coming to you. You act as though you never saw two hundred dollars in your life."

"True enough," said the old woman. "It's many a day since I've had that much in a lump. When do I get it?"

"Shall we say to-morrow," suggested Mr. Mitchel. "There will be some papers to sign, and then you can have the amount due you. Shall I call here, or can you come to our office."

"I would n't put you to the trouble of callin' again, sir. Just tell me where to go, and I'll be there on time." The old lady was quite affable now, and Mr. Mitchel was pleased with his success. He had not only well accounted for his present visit, but he had arranged an opportunity to meet Mrs. Cooper alone, under such circumstances as would make it possible for him to catechise her. He therefore handed her the address of his own solicitors, and asked her to meet him on the following day at eleven o'clock. Then he turned to the girl:

"Pardon me, Miss Cooper, but you bear a great resemblance to a very beautiful little actress, who calls herself the Lily of the Valley. Have you ever been told so before?"

"Have I heard I look like the Lily? Well I should smile," said she, laughing, but evidently pleased at the neat compliment. "Why, I 'm the Lily of the Valley myself. My name ain't Cooper. This is my foster mother. My name 's Lilian Vale."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said Mr. Mitchel. "But having seen you on the stage, I could not but notice what seemed to be such a very remarkable likeness. I hope you will excuse my making such a mistake."

"Oh, you 're all right. I don't mind being told I'm good looking. Don't I know it myself? Don't you suppose I peep at my face in the glass once in a while? Well I reckon!"

"Undoubtedly you need no one to tell you of your beauty," said Mr. Mitchel, observing her fondness for flattery.

"Well I ain't very homely, that 's a fact. But I say, it 's funny you knew me. I 'm made up on the stage. I never met you before, did I?"

Mr. Mitchel thought this an opportunity to play a trick upon her as a test. She assuredly was entirely unsuspecting of his real motives. His words were:

"Oh, no! But I have seen a photograph of you, that my friend Mr. Mora has!"

The experiment was devoid of results, except that it seemed to prove that she did not know the name. This seemed very probable, because, however well one may be able to conceal one's thoughts and feelings, all human beings, when taken by surprise, must lack perfect self-control. What she said was :

"Mr. Mora? Who is he? I never heard of him. If he's got my picture, you can bet your life I never gave it to him. He must have bought it, the gilly. But then, the woods are full of them."

"Did you never hear the name before?" asked Mr. Mitchel, reluctant to admit what seemed certain.

"Let me see," said the girl thoughtfully. "Mora! Seems familiar too. Mora! Mora! Where did I hear that name? Oh! Holy gee! Why that's the name of the old fellow that was killed by his son, was n't it?"

"You are right. Some persons still believe that my friend, Matthew Mora, killed his father. But I assure you he is innocent."

"Well, I hope so for your sake. Would n't be nice to have your friend sit in the electric chair, would it? Ugh! Let's change the subject. It makes me shiver. I must be going anyway."

"That reminds me, that I am overstaying my business," said Mr. Mitchel. "But if you are walking, I would be pleased to accompany you as far as we go together."

"All right. Come along. I'm going across town."

Well, bye-bye, Mum. See you again on Monday, if I'm alive. Good bye."

She stooped and kissed the old woman, who looked eagerly at Mr. Mitchel and said :

"I'll be at the office in the mornin'. It's sure I'll get the money?"

"Absolutely sure, Madam. I will see you to-morrow. Good morning!"

Mr. Mitchel and Lilian Vale walked along through the crowded thoroughfare, an oddly assorted couple. He, a gentleman of eminent social and intellectual worth, and she, a daughter of the slums, though a beautiful one. Mr. Mitchel glanced down at her from time to time, admiring her face, but busy also with other thoughts.

When he had first seen the photograph, he had been much surprised at finding that the face seemed somehow quite familiar to him. He had pondered over this, until at length he had solved the puzzle. The photograph reminded him of a similar one in the possession of his adopted daughter Rose, the likeness of a young woman who had been a school friend. Afterwards he had compared the photographs and was even more astonished, so great was the resemblance. Yet one was an actress in the dives, a slum product, and the other was the cherished idol of a millionaire, and had been nurtured in the lap of luxury.

He was acquainted with this wealthy young lady, and now that the other was at his side, he was more than

ever puzzled, for the originals were as much alike as the portraits. It was no chance trick of the camera.

As they walked, she gabbled on, expressing childish thoughts, in childish language, but full of the slang of the quarter in which she had been reared. Mr. Mitchel found his problem growing in mystery. Several questions confronted him.

Could this girl be the Mrs. Morton whom young Mora had been so anxious that Mr. Barnes should not meet? Could it be that this child was the mother of the abandoned baby? Her environment was such that this at least was possible; the next logical query, therefore, was, who was the father? Lastly, how to account for the resemblance between the heiress, Perdita Maria Van Cortlandt, and the actress Lilian Vale, "The Lily of the Valley."

Absorbed in these thoughts, Mr. Mitchel had not noted through what streets they had walked, until he heard the girl say :

"This is as far as I go!"

Imagine his amazement to find that they were in front of the house in Essex street from which only the day before the supposed wife of young Mora had been hurriedly removed.

"You live here?" asked Mr. Mitchel, endeavoring not to evince unusual interest in the question.

"I did once, but I have moved."

"How long is it since you left this house?"

Something in his words or manner must have attracted her attention, for, instead of replying, she looked at him earnestly for a moment, and then asked :

“ Why do you wish to know that ? ”

Mr. Mitchel feared that she was growing suspicious of him, and thought best to act promptly, giving her no time to guard against surprise. He consequently quickly answered :

“ Because I wish to know where you are living now, Mrs. Morton ! ”

These words aroused her fully, and she gazed at him with fear plainly depicted upon her features.

“ How did you know—did you know that I am married ? ” she stammered.

“ So ! You admit that you are Mrs. Morton then ? ”

“ No ! ” said the girl, regaining her composure. “ I admit that I am married, since you seem to know that. But my name is not Morton.”

“ What is your name, then ? ”

“ I am Mrs. Matthew Crane.”

This statement astounded Mr. Mitchel as much as his questioning had surprised the girl. Two thoughts darted swiftly through his mind. Preacher Jim's mother was named Margaret Crane. Secondly, in his interview with her, she had once alluded to her son as “ Matthew.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TEST OF NATURE.

“YOU tell me that you are Mrs. Matthew Crane?” repeated Mr. Mitchel.

“Yes, I do!” said the girl. “Do you find anything strange in that?”

“I find it very strange,” replied Mr. Mitchel, “because it happens that I am acquainted with Matthew Crane, though I did not know that he was married.”

“You know him? You know my husband?” cried the girl, evidently much disturbed.

“Yes! I know him very well!”

“Oh! You won’t tell him, will you? Please don’t tell him that I told you about our being—being married?”

“Why should I not tell him? Where is the harm of telling a man that you have met his wife?”

Mr. Mitchel spoke thus to alarm the girl, if possible, and to make her more apt to betray herself. For he was sure that there was deception.

“Oh! No! No!” she cried vehemently. “You don’t understand! You must not tell him! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I’ve been a fool to talk to you! A fool!”

A fool!" With these words she burst into tears, woman's usual resource when she wishes to soften the heart of a man.

"Come, come!" said Mr. Mitchel, putting one arm about her caressingly. "Don't cry, little woman! I'm not an ogre! I won't tell, if you don't wish me! There! There! Stop crying!"

She was easily calmed, and hastily wiped away her tears with a tiny handkerchief. Whenever I see one of these diminutive appendages to a woman's toilet, the thought occurs to me that they are more fitted for the eye than the nose. They are soft and sheer, and do not redden the eyes when used for mopping up tears.

Lilian was so anxious to be reassured as to Mr. Mitchel's promise, that she did not notice that she dropped this handkerchief after wiping her eyes, nor that Mr. Mitchel stooped and picked it up. He held it mechanically in his hand while she spoke.

"Oh! You won't tell him?" she cried. "Mind, that's a promise! You see, I didn't know you knew him, or I would n't have told you."

She pouted her lips, and tossed her head pertly, while her eyes, sparkling through their moisture, made her look like a pretty spoiled child. Yet she claimed to be a wife!

"I promise not to repeat what you have told me, but only on condition that you tell me more," said Mr. Mitchel.

"Tell you more?" exclaimed Lilian, again alarmed.

"Yes! You must tell me why you do not wish me to speak of your marriage to Matthew Crane."

"Oh! No! I can't tell you that."

"Very well! Then I cannot promise to keep it a secret."

"Well then," said Lilian in desperation, "the reason is because—" she hung her head and lowered her voice as she completed her sentence, and the hot blood surged to her face mantling it in a blush which extended to the tips of her ears—"because we're not married!" She paused for just a moment, then, with uplifted eyes, lighted up with a beam of hopefulness that was piteous in its trustfulness, she added:

"But we are going to be!"

"Poor child! Poor stray lamb!" said Mr. Mitchel, laying his hand reverently on the girl's head, and gazing into her dark eyes wherein he saw reflected naught but innocence.

"If ever sin was guiltless, it is here in the heart of this child," he thought, then added aloud:

"I want to have a talk with you, my girl. A long, long talk. Let us ride on the Elevated railroad, and have our chat."

"You don't mean me any harm?" she asked, doubtfully.

"Harm! No, indeed, my girl! I only wish to be a friend to you. I would not harm a hair of your head! Will you come?"

He extended his hand, and she looked at him a full minute, hesitatingly. Then with a sudden impulse, she placed her pretty soft hand in his and exclaimed :

“ Yes ! I ’ll risk it. I ’ll go with you.”

They were soon comfortably seated in a Harlem train, in one of the double seats in the first car, which is usually the least crowded.

“ Now, then,” began Mr. Mitchel, “ tell me all about it ? ”

“ All about what ? ” asked Lilian.

“ About how you happened to be Mrs. Matthew Crane, without being married.”

She blushed again, and looked out of the window. Mr. Mitchel did not press his question, but was content to let her decide for herself. But he had retained her handkerchief, with which he was toying, twisting it about his fingers, and now he noted something which aroused his curiosity. There was a bit of embroidery in the corner. A tiny spray of lily of the valley. Mr. Mitchel glanced from the handkerchief, to the girl beside him. Could it be, or was this merely a coincidence ? She called herself “ The Lily of the Valley,” therefore it was natural that she should so mark a handkerchief. But then was it probable that any other person would do the same, and that this other was the mother of the infant ?

“ I don’t know why I should tell you my story,” at last she said, turning frankly towards him, “ yet some-

thing tells me to do it. The fact is I have n't been very happy lately, and I've wanted somebody to talk to about it all. Somebody that would n't blame me too much and would n't scold, but would just help me. But there was n't anybody like that. Once on a time I would have gone to Mum, but these days, she 's mostly full of gin, and you could n't look for sympathy in a gin-bottle could you, now ? ”

As she talked she gradually regained her composure, and there was a merry twinkle in her eyes as she asked the question.

“Why no, of course not ! ” said Mr. Mitchel quite seriously. “But then you know, I never take gin. Honor bright ! ”

He talked to her as a school-boy might have talked to a school-girl, his very intonation inviting friendship and confidence, both of which she gave him readily.

“Why ! I never thought of you that way. I was talk-in' of Mum ! ” she said. “You was in luck to find her sober to day, and you 'll be luckier still if she 's able to meet you to morrow. But this ain't telling you my story, is it ? ”

“No ! It is not.”

“Where 'll I begin ? ”

“At the beginning.”

“Well then once upon a time I was born—” she began with a light laugh, which was instantly checked when Mr. Mitchel interrupted, asking :

“When and where was that?”

“The Lord only knows,” she answered, “and He won’t tell. Least ways He’s never let on to me. I’ve tried hard enough to find out too, but I never could. I think Mum knows a little, but she’s close about it. All I could ever get out of her was ‘Your folks didn’t care enough to keep you, so you need n’t bother your head about them.’”

“So you have never known your father or your mother?”

“No! Never a hide nor hair of either one, did I see. So we may as well skip that I reckon, and come down to what I do know about. The first I remember was when I was six years old.”

“What happened then?”

“I went on the stage!”

“On the stage, at six years?”

“Yes. I played little Eva in Uncle Tom’s Cabin. There was a fellow seen me on the street one day by our house, that is Mum’s house, you know. I lived with her ever since I could remember. Well, he took a fancy to me, and he found Mum, and he offered her ten dollars a week to let me go with a company he had. You can bet Mum jumped at the chance. So the man got me and we went all over the country. Everybody was good to me, the men and the women. But I’m sorry now I ever started in the stage business, at least so young.”

“Why?”

“Well, I can’t exactly complain, but then you see it made me old, while I was still little. You might almost say I never was a child at all. Just a baby for a few years and then a woman. Do you understand what I mean?”

“Only too well, I fear. Go on.”

“Well, I did the Eva business off and on for four seasons. One of the actors taught me to sing and dance, and when he left the company he offered Mun more money for me, so I went with him a couple of seasons. We used to do a sketch together. He played the part of a blind Irishman, and I was his little girl, and he used to find his way home by hearing me sing, and a lot more like that. Then I got to be twelve years old, and I branched out for myself.”

“Branched out for yourself? What do you mean?”

“Well, you see I found out about things, and I caught on that Mum was getting fifteen dollars a week for me, when the man I was with got forty, cause you see I was a sort of a genius. Honor bright I was. Don’t you believe it?”

“Indeed, I do,” said Mr. Mitchel heartily.

“You’d better say so,” she continued, with a grave shake of her head which once more made her appear extremely youthful. “If you didn’t I might shock the people in the car by cutting a pigeon wing for you. Well, I was what they call an instantaneous success. I

went about it in a big way, I tell you. I just marched into one of the up-town agents, and I got into a talk with him, and told him my scheme. I offered him twenty-five per cent. to look out for me, and he made the bargain with me. He got out those beautiful lithographs of me. You 've seen them?"

"Yes! Was it he who called you the Lily of the Valley?"

"No! That was my own idea. You see I used to be 'Little Lilian' when I played Eva, but now I was going to be a star, I wanted my full name. Lilian Vale sounded kind of tame, and first off I thought I'd just put an accent on the 'e' and call it Vallee. Then it struck me all of a sudden like, and I wrote it down, 'Miss Lilian Vale—The Lily of the Valley.' That way you see I got in the Lily, and the Vallee, only in a prettier way."

"This was when you were twelve, you say?"

"Yes! My! Don't that seem ages ago! But it ain't! I'm only past sixteen now. Well, as I said, I made a hit from the jump, and pretty soon I was getting my thirty dollars a week in the Bowery, and more when I went on the road. That was n't bad, was it?"

"Not at all! But now tell me when you first met your husband."

"Oh! You want to know most about that? Well, now that I'm started I may as well give you the whole thing. I met him the second season I was a star. I

was singing in the Bowery, one of those places where they let the audience drink in the theatre. There was a box that opened on the stage, and one night a young man in that box threw me some flowers. I picked them up, and without thinking I threw him a kiss. That began it."

Alas ! how many of life's tragedies begin with a kiss !

"He came behind," she continued, "and spoke to me. The next night he came again, and he brought me candy, and I let him walk home with me. After that we got to be great friends, and then—then I got to love him. Do you know, I loved him so it made my head ache to think about it. Because I always thought I was n't good enough for him. That was when he was n't with me. But then he 'd come again, and be nice to me, and bring me flowers and candy, and he 'd kiss me, and then I 'd be happy again."

"Poor child," muttered Mr. Mitchel.

"What did you say ?" asked Lilian.

"Nothing ! Nothing !" hastily replied Mr. Mitchel.

"Oh ! I thought you spoke !" Then she went on :
"You see he was very good to me those days. Then the summer came, and he took me to picnics and excursions, and we had a good time together. He always called me his little sweetheart, and told me how much he loved me. One day I asked him something. I did n't mean to, but it just slipped out. My heart was so full of it, that it just spilled over, like. He was talking about

loving me, and he kissed me. Then I asked him, 'Are you going to marry me some day?' He looked at me a minute and then he said, 'Do you think you love me enough for that?' I answered that very quick. 'It is n't a question about my love,' I said. 'The question is do you love me enough. I'd lie down in the dirt and let you walk over me.' 'Well, then,' said he, 'you can be happy, for I mean to marry you some day.' "

She paused here for a moment, and then added with a sad cadence in her voice :

"That was when I was fourteen, and I've never been real happy since that day."

"So! He accepted your love, and gave you a promise in return?" asked Mr. Mitchel. "That was all?"

"That was all! But he has often repeated the promise, and I still believe he'll keep his word. Some day!"

"Now, then," said Mr. Mitchel speaking softly, "I want you to tell me when your baby was born?"

It was cruel to take her thus by surprise, but Mr. Mitchel thought himself justified, even though he was unwilling to give her pain. She looked up at him with horror depicted upon her countenance, and was obliged to put her hand over her mouth to suppress the cry that sprang to her lips.

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"Just what I said. When was your baby born?"

"But—but—I have no baby!" she blurted out desperately.

"Oh ! But you have !" persisted Mr. Mitchel.

Then he saw the girl in a new aspect. A different side of her character was revealed to him. She turned upon him defiantly and exclaimed :

"So that's your game, is it? You think you are smart, don't you? But you can't play tricks on me. If you've found a baby, you'll have a hard time trying to prove it's mine. I tell you I have n't any."

"Suppose that the infant of which I am speaking was abandoned by its parents?"

"What of it? That happens every day in the year. What does that prove?"

"But suppose it was found in a graveyard?"

"In a graveyard?" she repeated, and her eyes opened wide in astonishment.

"Yes, in a graveyard. A strange place for a baby, is it not?"

"Well, I should say so. How did it get there?"

"Let me tell you the story. This baby was found in a graveyard without any clothes on. Not any at all, you understand?"

"The poor little dear," she said, softly.

"It had been crawling among the tombstones for several days, when it was discovered."

"But how did it get there?"

"Ah, that is the question. We know that it was placed there, at night, by a man. We think that the man was the child's father."

“Impossible ! No man could be such a monster. Somebody stole that baby, I’ll bet, and then didn’t know what to do with it.”

“No ! In that case he would have left it where it would be found. This man wished the child to die. That is why I say it was the father who wished to get rid of the child.”

“But why should a father wish to kill his own child ?”

“Perhaps because he had not married the mother ?”

She shuddered, and remained silent. The words evidently aroused unpleasant thoughts, yet her manner throughout had been such that Mr. Mitchel was assured in his own mind that at least she had no guilty knowledge of the abandonment of the infant. And this being true, it greatly complicated the case. For if she were innocent in that respect, how could she have consented so readily to the disappearance of her child ? This almost led him to believe that she had spoken the truth, and that after all he might have been mistaken in connecting her with the case. But just then she noticed that he held a handkerchief in his hand, and asked :

“Why, is n’t that mine ?”

“Is it ?” asked Mr. Mitchel, handing it to her.

“Why, yes,” said she. “See, here is my mark in the corner. I mark all my things with a lily of the valley.”

This decided Mr. Mitchel. He would make a supreme test, especially as they were approaching a station where, if they should descend to the street, he

would have but a few steps to go in order to carry out his plan.

"Oh, by the way," said he, "I would like to get out here. Will you come with me? I will not detain you more than a few moments, and then we will resume our conversation. I wish before we part to explain to you why I thought you were a mother."

She consented to go with him, and together they walked as far as the building wherein are the rooms of the Metropolitan Foundling Society. It so happened that as they went in Colonel Payton was just coming out. He stopped to speak to Mr. Mitchel, but kept his eyes on Lilian, who modestly withdrew and stood aside.

"Well, Mitchel," said the Colonel, "how do you prosper with your fine notions about justice, eh? Found anyone to agree with you yet?"

"I have not been looking for an advocate of my views," said Mr. Mitchel. "I have been 'slumming,' Colonel."

"Slumming, eh? I hope you have n't a very sharp nose. But, I say, you did not pick that up in the slums," he added, as he cast an admiring glance at Lilian.

"That is exactly where I found her," said Mr. Mitchel. "I see you are not too old to notice a pretty face!"

"Too old? Well, I should say not, sir. But what you tell me seems marvellous. Found her in the slums, eh? Well, Well! What a pretty flower to be growing among weeds."

"True, Colonel, but then you know the wind may waft the seed from the choicest blossom into the foulest soil, and yet these seeds may take root, and grow, and blossoms may come again."

"No doubt! But it's a very careless gardener who allows good seeds to blow away."

"True! And what shall we say of the gardener who wilfully casts his choicest seeds to the winds?"

"Such a man would be an ass—or worse!"

"Or worse!" agreed Mr. Mitchel. "Well added, Colonel. Or worse! Much worse in this case."

"In this case? What do you mean?"

"I mean that this is the blossom from a seed cast away by the gardener, who is worse than an ass, as you have put it."

"Don't talk to me in riddles, man," said the Colonel, testily. "Speak plainly."

"I will do so. She is a little Bowery singer. The daughter of unknown parents, who cast her adrift when an infant."

"A foundling?"

"Probably. Reared in the tenements of the East Side."

"You don't say so? Is n't it awful, the amount of depravity that exists in this world? Is n't it marvellous that a parent would abandon his own flesh and blood?"

"I can find no excuse for such a course," said Mr. Mitchel, "though there might be some palliation."

"Excuse—palliation? Rubbish! You don't know what you are saying."

"Listen to me, Colonel. Here is a girl, herself abandoned by her parents. Let us suppose a case: one that is far from improbable. She has this heritage, what we may call an atrophied bump of philoprogenitiveness. She is reared in that maelstrom of vice and crime, the great East Side. But to return to our simile; how would you expect this tender flower, this hot-house plant, to thrive in that environment, and retain its purity and fragrance? It grows among weeds, and becomes tainted with the odor of the rank blossoms about it. Soon a child is born. A child whose father fails to acknowledge it. Suppose that the mother, finding it a burden, should abandon the child? Is the fault entirely hers, or must the responsibility be shared by those from whom she inherited the lack of motherly love?"

"Look here, Mr. Mitchel, you must go elsewhere with your psychological or physiological problem, whichever this is. I have no time for speculations of that nature. I am too practical. But I hope this girl's story, is not——"

"Oh, I am only giving you a hypothetical case," hastily interjected Mr. Mitchel. "But I say, Colonel, you can do me a favor. Will you?"

"What is it?"

"I wish to take this young woman upstairs, and let her see that baby found in the graveyard. I have a fancy, that she may be able to identify it."

“Ha ! You have n’t forgotten that case, eh ? Certainly ! I ’ll go up with you. I am interested in the matter. We would like to get a clue.”

He led the way, and Mr. Mitchel went over to Lilian, and taking her arm they followed. As they passed through the door of the room above, Mr. Mitchel handed Lilian a chair and asked her to wait, placing her so that she could not see around the corner of the L-shaped apartment, and suspect what was about to happen.

The Matron being summoned, brought in the infant, wrapped in a shawl, and tenderly placed it in Mr. Mitchel’s arms. He motioned to her and the Colonel to remain behind, and stepping gently, he approached the chair where he had left Lilian. Touching her on the arm, he said :

“I told you, in the car, the story of an infant that was found in the graveyard. Do you remember ?”

“Yes !” said she, wonderingly, her eyes intent upon the bundle in Mr. Mitchel’s arms. He drew down the shawl, exposing the face to view, and said :

“This is the child. Look closely ! Have you ever seen it before ?”

She gazed at it, at first with mere curiosity, then she bent eagerly forward, and looked more intently. Then the little one opened its eyes, and looked into her face. Thus the two stared at each other for an instant,

and then the baby stretched out its arms and cooed softly :

“ Mum ! Mum ! ”

With a loud cry, Lilian grasped the child, and straining it to her breast, exclaimed aloud :

“ My baby ! My God ! It is my baby ! ”

CHAPTER XV.

PERDITA.

COLONEL PAYTON observed this scene in great surprise, while Mr. Mitchel only smiled, the denouement of his experiment being what he had expected. Lilian sat in the chair, and crooned over her baby, apparently oblivious of those who stood near her.

“When you brought this girl here, did you think she was the baby’s mother?” asked Colonel Payton.

“I thought so,” said Mr. Mitchel, “but I was not sure. She denied it, therefore I brought the mother and child together, relying upon the instincts of Nature to reveal the truth. There is yet much to be explained, however.”

“Much to be explained?” cried the Colonel. “I should say so. She will have to explain why she abandoned the child, and she must explain it before a jury, too.”

“Before a jury! What do you mean?”

“I mean that I will have her detained here, until the authorities are informed of what has taken place. Then she must go to prison. I have no doubt, that with your assistance she will be indicted by the Grand Jury.”

"Oh, indeed ! But you will not have my assistance."

"You mean you will not testify against her. Well, well ! You are a poor citizen. You hesitate to do your duty, deterred by a pretty face. If all men were like you, crime would go unpunished."

"You are quite correct, Colonel. If all men shared my views the punishment of crime would be abolished."

"Bah ! It makes me sick to hear a man of your brains indulge in such mawkish sentimentality. You allow your senses to be led astray by a woman's pretty face. This woman has committed a crime, and she must suffer the consequences. You are new at this sort of thing, but I am an old hand. I know my duty."

"And you think it is your duty to punish this child ?"

"Why, no ! Not the child, but the mother." The Colonel did not quite comprehend Mr. Mitchel's meaning. The latter therefore added :

"Ah, but the mother is herself a child !"

"Oh ! I see what you mean. But youth is no excuse in a case of this kind."

"Then you are determined to have her punished ?"

"It is my duty to see that the law is carried out."

"But why ?"

"Because she has committed a crime."

"What evidence have you of that ?"

"Why, did she not admit that the child is hers ?"

"Yes, but that does not prove that she abandoned it."

"Why, who else could have done it ?"

"Why not the father? Fathers have done such things, have they not? Did you never hear of such a case?"

The subject evidently was distasteful to the Colonel, and besides, it was ever his habit, when he found himself worsted in an argument, to bring the conversation to an abrupt close, as he endeavored to do now.

"That's most unlikely," said he. "Anyway, I leave the proof to the District Attorney. It is none of my business."

"You are mistaken. It is exactly your business to learn the truth, before you blast this young girl's future by bringing such a charge against her. It will do no harm to question her. Will you listen to her replies, while I talk with her?"

"Oh, I have n't a doubt that the lies will roll off her glib tongue faster than we could write them down. But you are determined to have your own way, I suppose, so fire away. You're a crank, Mitchel, that's what you are. A crank."

Mr. Mitchel approached Lilian, who was still busy playing with her baby, and talking in a low tone with the Matron, who sympathized with the pretty young mother. Touching her gently on the shoulder, to attract her attention, he said :

"So it is your baby after all?"

"Oh! Yes! I am so surprised. How did she get here?"

“Did I not tell you? She was found crawling among the tombstones in an old graveyard down town.”

“You mean that was a real story you told me? And it was my baby? I don’t understand it all. What does it mean?”

She gazed at him appealingly, perplexed beyond measure, and Mr. Mitchel felt assured of her sincerity; but the Colonel sneered, and said:

“You stated that she is an actress, did you not? She plays her part very well. Quite an innocent, is she not?”

Mr. Mitchel did not seem to notice the cruel speech, but again addressed Lilian.

“Yes, it was all true, as I told you the story. You remember you asked me who could have placed the child there?”

“Yes! And you said you suspected the father! But if you were talking about my baby, then you are wrong. Matthew never would have done such a thing. Never! Never! Never!”

“You mean Matthew Crane?”

“Yes, but you said you know him? Why do you call him that?”

“You mean I ought to call him Jim?” asked Mr. Mitchel, “Preacher Jim?”

“Why, no. Preacher Jim is not my—my husband. How could you think that?”

It was now Mr. Mitchel’s turn to be bewildered. When she had told him that her name was Mrs. Matthew

Crane, he had felt satisfied that it was the criminal of whom she spoke. Now it dawned upon him that he had been under some misapprehension, but he did not yet see wherein he had been in error. He hastened to lead her on now, lest her own suspicions might be aroused, and she should thereafter refuse to make further disclosures.

"I thought you told me so. Then Matthew Crane is not your husband's real name?"

"Why, no! If you know him, you ought to know that. His name is Matthew Morton."

"Matthew Morton," thought Mr. Mitchel, quickly grasping the truth. "It was Matthew Mora, alias Matthew Morton, who was the father of this waif. How very strange that what had at first seemed a totally different affair should now prove to be connected in so important a manner with the case which Mr. Barnes was investigating!"

"Of course! Of course!" said he aloud. "It was to you, then, that he sent the note, yesterday morning, when you left the house in Essex Street in a carriage?"

That he should have this knowledge seemed to reassure the girl, for she now spoke to him more freely.

"Why, yes," said she. "Matthew wrote me that I must leave the house and go to a boarding-house in Tenth Street; and he told me to call myself Mrs. Crane, till I heard from him again. That's why I gave you that name."

This seemed very significant to Mr. Mitchel. Did Matthew Mora know that Preacher Jim's true name was Matthew Crane, and did he instruct Lilian to assume that name, as a means of throwing detectives upon a false scent, in case they should track the girl to her new abode? It began to look as though Mr. Barnes's estimate of the man was correct. But the main point at present was to learn what part he had played in the removal of the child from its mother, and in its subsequent abandonment. Mr. Mitchel dismissed all idea of collusion on the part of the girl.

"You say your husband did not place your baby in the graveyard. How do you know this?"

"I suppose I might as well tell you the whole truth. Well, one night we were to a ball at Apollo Hall, when who should turn up but an old gent, who walked straight to where we were dancing. He grabs me by the arm and squeezed me so hard, I screamed. Then he threw me one side, and grabbing Matthew, he says: 'I want you to come out of this.' Matthew never said a word, but went with him. They went down to the saloon, and they had high words together, but after awhile Matthew came up again, and tried to make out as if nothing was wrong. But I would n't have it, so finally he told me the old man was his father; that he was on to us and was in an ugly humor. I got scared at that and began to cry, but Matthew told me there was nothing to cry about. There was nothing the old man could do to me

anyway, whatever he might do to him. Then all of a sudden Matthew turned white like, as though he had a sudden idea, and he says to me, 'You wait for me here. I'll be back.' Then he rushed off. He was gone a long time, and only got back as the ball was breaking up, and he took me home. When we got there, baby was gone. I was frightened, but Matthew explained everything to me. 'I got an idea at the ball,' said he, 'that the Gov'nur might have found out where we were living. If he had come here and seen the baby, it would have been all up with me. He would have disinherited me, sure. So I rushed round here, and there was the little cherub in his crib. But I know my Gov'nur, and I ain't taking chances. So I've taken baby to a nurse I know up town, and she'll be all right till this blows over.' 'Till this blows over,' says I, 'you ain't never going to keep baby from me for a long time?' 'Oh, no,' says he, 'only till the old gent gets off his high horse. That won't be more'n a week. But it's best for you not to see baby for a while. You might be watched. The old man is full of that sort of thing. If I find it out, I may have to move you out of this in a hurry. So be ready any time you get word, to change boarding houses in a jiffy.' Then he kissed me and went off. I have n't seen him since, but that's why I was n't surprised when I got the note yesterday morning."

"Where did this nurse live? Did your husband tell you?"

"No. He said if he did n't tell me it would be safer, as nobody could get it out of me. So don't you see, he was so particular about baby's safety he never would have harmed her."

Mr. Mitchel looked down at her, as she stooped over and buried her face in the infant's clothing, and pitied her as he noted her childlike faith in her lover. This tale about the nurse was so transparent, and yet it had served to satisfy the trusting woman because she loved the man who had thus basely deceived her.

"About what time did the old man come to the ball and quarrel with your husband?" inquired Mr. Mitchel.

"Somewhere about eleven o'clock, I should say. It was long before supper, and that was twelve."

"And what time was it when your husband returned to take you home?"

"It was about half-past three!"

"What did I tell you?" interrupted Colonel Payton. "Do you hear? She is trying to show now that the man had possession of the child, and took it away from her house about the time when it was placed in the graveyard. That is the way she hopes to shield herself. Oh, I tell you, women are tricky!"

"What do you mean? Who are you?" asked Lilian, rising and facing him. "When you say that I am trying to prove that my husband took our baby to that graveyard, you tell a lie. I say he did not do it. He would not, he could not do such a thing."

"No, it was you who did it!" cried the Colonel, losing his temper.

"That is another lie!" exclaimed Lilian, but more calmly.

"Look here, my good woman," said the Colonel; "keep a civil tongue in your head or it will be all the worse for you." Then turning to Mr. Mitchel, he added: "I say, Mitchel, this farce has gone on long enough. I will send for an officer and have this woman taken to the station house."

"No, no! Stop, Colonel!" cried Mr. Mitchel, grasping his arm. "I will take her to my own home, and I will be responsible for her appearance when you have found proof of your charges. Will that be satisfactory?"

"Oh, I suppose so," growled the Colonel. "Here, Matron, take the baby from her."

"Take my baby from me?" exclaimed Lilian. "No, no! You shall not do that. I have found her again, and we shall not be separated."

"You don't suppose I'm going to let you take the child away, do you?" sneered the Colonel.

"Then I'll stay here too," said Lilian, firmly, hugging the baby closer to her breast.

Mr. Mitchel took the Colonel aside.

"Now, Colonel Payton," said he, "you must be reasonable in this matter. I have good reasons for believing that this girl is a victim of a treacherous man, who has

deceived her. The best course, it seems to me, will be to detain her in the care of your Society until our evidence is complete. If you will do this, and for a couple of days will hold in abeyance your formal communication to the authorities, I will promise you decisive news at the end of that time. Will you do this?"

"Oh, I suppose I must humor you," said the Colonel, unwillingly consenting. "But it's irregular, and if anything should go wrong you must bear the consequences."

"I assume all responsibility," said Mr. Mitchel.

"Then I'll give the necessary orders to the Matron," said the Colonel walking off.

Mr. Mitchel went to Lilian and spoke to her gently, advising her to remain in the building with her baby; to make no effort to get away; and to trust him to do his utmost in her behalf. He promised to see her again soon, and he went away, satisfied that he had made the best arrangement possible under the peculiar circumstances.

Leaving the building he crossed over to Fifth Avenue, and walked rapidly up that thoroughfare. He walked, because he wished to reflect. He found the problem which engaged his mind assuming more complicated form than ever. He could readily see how the knowledge which now was his, would have more than convinced Mr. Barnes of the correctness of his suspicions against young Mora. The detective would have argued that the man who had quarrelled with his father, and had abandoned his own child, would scarcely have

hesitated to kill his father, under the fear of being disinherited. But for the present Mr. Mitchel dismissed that side of the subject from his thoughts. The supposition that Mora was the murderer, left much to be explained in connection with the mysterious killing of Slippery Sam, and the finding of the will in the young crook's pocket. Besides, he could not reconcile Mora's guilt with certain theories of his own, which he was not yet ready to abandon. Therefore, despite the evidence which seemed to accumulate against the dead man's son, Mr. Mitchel considered the case still unproven.

But there was another matter which interested him in no ordinary degree. The great resemblance between the photographs of Lilian Vale, and his daughter's school friend, Perdita Van Cortlandt, seemed to invite study. But having seen Lilian, and having closely observed her face, he was more than ever struck by the likeness between herself and the other girl, as he remembered her. Yet it was possible that memory was here playing him a trick. He had not seen Perdita for nearly a year, and so could not now be sure that he was not deceived, in fancying the likeness to be so great.

Then it occurred to him that there was nothing to prevent his calling at her house. He was sufficiently well acquainted with her family to do this without exciting comment. With Lilian's features freshly imprinted upon his memory he could thus make a comparison which would be decisive.

Half an hour later, therefore, he stood at the door of the Van Cortlandt residence and sent in his name. The servant not recognizing him as a familiar visitor, ushered him into a small reception room, separated from the larger parlors beyond by heavy oriental draperies.

While awaiting the return of the man, Mr. Michel was attracted by a fine Corot which hung on the wall near the portières, and went to that end of the room to examine it. Standing there, he was surprised to hear a voice, which he instantly recognized, speaking in most earnest tones, in the apartment beyond.

“But, Perdita, my darling, you have admitted that you love me! Then why do you hesitate? Can you not trust me? Or do you, too, still doubt?”

It was Matthew Mora who was thus pleading. Thus another and most unlooked-for chapter was added to this case. Mr. Mitchel firmly believed, in fact could not doubt, that Mora was the father of Lilian's child. He fancied that there was an unusual resemblance between Lilian herself and Perdita. And here he overheard Mora making ardent professions of love to the latter.

Had Mora also noticed the similarity between his little beauty of the slums, and this society belle? Was it this which had attracted him to this girl who was his social equal, and whom society would adjudge to be a more fitting companion to him through life? As these thoughts occurred to him, Perdita was replying.

“How can you think me so contemptible? I have

confessed my love for you. Does not that suffice? Do you think that I could care for you, and not trust you?"

"Then you do believe in my innocence?" pursued Mora.

"As I believe in my Maker," was the girl's reply, and the words jarred unpleasantly on Mr. Mitchel's ear.

It was not pleasant to be thus playing eavesdropper, but the events which were rushing one upon the other so swiftly, and the very interests of this girl herself, seemed to justify Mr. Mitchel in adopting this method of learning the truth. He was therefore glad that the servant did not return too quickly.

The conversation on the other side of the portières continued.

"Ah, you say you believe in my innocence, that you trust me. But, Perdita, when I wish to put that faith to a test, then you shrink. You hesitate to comply with my wishes."

"Ah, but what you ask is so unnecessary. I do not understand why you should make such a request, nor do I think I ought to accede. I owe something to my mother, you know."

"When a woman truly loves a man she is ready to give up home, parents, and even self to follow his fortunes."

"I am willing to do all that, but I do not see why you should ask me to do so in twenty-four hours. That is very sudden."

"Oh, love affairs are always sudden surprises to women. That is what they all say."

"Now you are unjust and unkind!" Her voice trembled a little, and Mr. Mitchel was strongly tempted to open the draperies and chastise this man, who was urging a girl to do that which her conscience rebelled against. Taking advantage of the young girl's emotion, which he thought indicated a tendency to yield, Mora pressed his suit with renewed ardor.

"My darling, forgive me if I have spoken roughly. But it is because I love you so, that I cannot bear to lose you, and something tells me that if I do not win you now, that if I cannot persuade you to go with me, I shall never call you mine."

"But why? Now you show that you do not trust me. I will wait for your return, and be true to you forever."

"Yes! Yes! You think so, and you mean what you say. But listen! I must go away. I must leave this detested place where all my friends regard me with suspicion. No one knows what I have suffered during the last few days. I have been accused of murdering my father, and the law has released me. But don't you see that until the real murderer is discovered, there must be a doubt in the minds of people? They are not fully convinced. Unfortunately, my father left me a lot of money. Worse yet, there was a will leaving half of the fortune to charity, and that has disappeared. Nine millions thus come to me as sole heir, which ought to go

to charity. Yet what can I do? If I turn that amount over to charity, people will say: 'He is trying to buy back his reputation.' If I keep it they will say: 'He profited by the loss of the will, perhaps he is guilty, after all.' At any rate, until the mystery be cleared up, and my innocence demonstrated to the whole world, it is only natural that people should prefer to avoid my acquaintance. So at present I am an outcast. A social pariah. I am alone in this great city; friendless in spite of my millions. My God, I cannot stand it! I will not stand it! I must get away, away across the ocean, to some remote corner of the world, where I can wait till the truth is known, or stay away forever. And I think it will be forever, for something tells me that the murderer will never be discovered. I am a ruined man! Ruined! Ruined! So you are right to hesitate. You are right! Quite right! I do not blame you."

He spoke bitterly, and there was a true ring to his words, as though it all came from his heart. Yet Mr. Mitchel could not avoid the thought that just such words as these, just such emotional tones, were best calculated to excite a young girl's sympathies to the point where she might overstep the dictates of discretion, and take a false step.

Before he could hear her reply, the servant approached, and Mr. Mitchel went to the other end of the room, that he might not appear to have been listening. The man announced that Mrs. Van Cortlandt would be down in a

few minutes, and then withdrew. Mr. Mitchel hastened back to the portières, but too late to know just what the girl had said. Mora was speaking again, and very rapidly.

“Yes! Yes! My darling! I believe that you love me, and I know that I am asking a great sacrifice. Listen! We will compromise! I will let you think it all over alone. If you decide in my favor, take the train which leaves the Grand Central for Boston to-morrow at noon, and when you reach Boston go to the Hotel Brunswick. I will be there, with a clergyman at hand in readiness to marry us. On the following day we will sail for Europe, and then, with our troubles left behind, our happiness will begin in earnest. Think it all over, dearest, and if you decide against me, send a dispatch to my house to-night. Just say ‘*Bon Voyage*,’ and I will set out on my journey alone. In any event I will take the midnight train to-night.”

“I will do as you say. I will think it all out alone, but I cannot decide now. I must have a little time. What seems right to me I will do. But if my duty here should prevent—then you will—you will forgive me?”

“Yes! I will forgive you.”

“And—and come back for me—some day?”

“Just as soon as these clouds blow away.”

“You promise me that? For if—if I do not go with you—I will wait for you—forever.”

Then, overcome by her emotion, she began to weep,

and Mora spoke soothingly to her in low tones. It seemed probable to Mr. Mitchel that, brave girl though she was, if left to herself she must eventually yield to the importunities of her heart, and forsake her home for this man, whose allegiance was rightfully due to another.

He walked slowly to the window which looked out into the street, and stood there, endeavoring to determine what course he should pursue. Presently his attention was attracted by the figure of a man partly concealed in a doorway opposite. He watched the man for a few moments, and then muttered :

“ A spy ! Can it be possible that Mr. Barnes is still maintaining an espionage over me ? ”

Just then, he heard Mora leaving the house, and saw him descend the stoop. He stood for a second on the pavement, looking sharply up and down. The man opposite, however, had withdrawn so that he was entirely out of view. Apparently satisfied, Mora walked rapidly up the street, turning the next corner. Then the spy came forth and glided swiftly after him.

“ Ha ! ” thought Mr. Mitchel, “ Mr. Barnes cannot divorce himself from routine methods. Well, if his man keeps Mora in sight, it may be an advantage this time.”

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. COOPER'S NARRATIVE.

MR. MITCHEL heard Perdita run up the broad stairway, and he readily guessed that she sought the solitude of her own chamber. A few moments later, Mrs. Van Cortlandt joined him in the reception room. He was now quite anxious to get away, and therefore he made his call very brief, pretending merely to have dropped in to ascertain whether he might bring his wife in the evening with the expectation of finding the family at home. Thus he arranged a plan by which he could meet Perdita again that night without exciting suspicion as to his motive.

It was after noon when Mr. Mitchel left the house, and he realized that to accomplish his full purpose he would need to be very active during the next twenty-four hours.

He had arranged for Mrs. Cooper to meet him on the following day, but that had been merely a ruse to find a chance to question her, and now he could not wait. Consequently he returned to the old woman's house at once.

Mrs. Cooper was surprised to see him again so soon, but he easily satisfied her.

"I found that it would not do to wait until to-morrow to see you again, Mrs. Cooper," said he, "as there is another affair of great importance in which you may be of assistance to me. In the first place, however, let me give you the amount due you on your pension claim, and you may sign a receipt."

Mr. Mitchel handed her a roll of bills, and wrote out a receipt which the old woman readily signed. This he did in order to establish himself thoroughly in her confidence. Then he continued :

"I want to have a serious conversation with you now about your adopted daughter Lily. She is your adopted child, I believe ?"

"Well, you might call her so," said Mrs. Cooper, "though I never took out no regular papers. You see, she came to me in a queer sort of way. But why should I tell you her story ?"

"I shall explain. I have heard it, in part, already. But the time has come when I must have the full details in order to save the girl herself."

"To save the girl herself ? To save my Lily ? Why, what 's happened ?"

"Did you know that Lily had a child ?"

"Lily have a child ? Of her own, you mean ? Why, man, you 're dreamin' ! Lily ain't more 'n a child herself."

"Nevertheless, she has a baby. Listen ! There is no time to be lost. As I have said, she has a baby, and this baby was recently abandoned in a graveyard."

“Oh, Lord ! Oh, Lord ! You never mean to tell me that ! Her own story all over again. Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! That ever I should live to see this day. But what could you expect ? ‘What ’s bred in the bone, will come out in the flesh,’ as the sayin’ goes.”

“Exactly ! And a saying with much wisdom in it. But you say this is Lily’s own story over again. Do you mean she was a foundling ? ”

“Yes ! a wee little tot of a thing, on my own doorstep wrapped in a shawl. That ’s how I found her one bitter cold mornin.’ But that ain’t the strangest part. I guess I ’d better tell you the whole story from beginnin’ to end, that is, if you ’re sure you mean my girl no harm ? ”

“On the contrary, I hope that something that you may tell me may aid me to rescue her from a danger which threatens. Rely upon me, and keep nothing back.”

“Well, it ’s seventeen year ago, come Thanksgivin’, when I wakes up wonderin’ what I had to offer up thanks for, ’xcept that I was alive, and little thanks for that, with my old man buried only three weeks. Anyway, as I was born in the Church, and bred up to Christian ways, I drops to my knees as I slipped out of bed, and I thanks the good Lord for all his mercies, and I remember that I added somethin’ about bein’ content though he ’d took away my old man without never givin’ me a baby to comfort me in my loneliness. For I al-

ways had a mother' heart, as there 's many another as never gets no babies. I declare this world do seem crooked sometimes. But that 's aside from my story, and I s'pose you 'd rather I 'd stick to that."

"Yes! Yes! Time is precious; but tell your story in your own way, and we shall get through all the more quickly. Go on."

"You're a gentleman with a deal of brains, now. If I was made to stick straight to the story, I don't doubt but what I 'd leave out half you 'd wish to know. Anyway I 'll do my best. So after my thanksgivin' I rose up and went to the window to let in some light. I raised up the sash to push open the blinds, and what do I see but a most suspicious lookin' bundle on my steps. I say suspicious, 'cause though I never had no babies myself, I 've tended many 's the one, and I guessed right off that some wretch had put a baby by my door. 'The Lord be praised,' I says out loud, though there were n't no one by to hear, 'maybe He 's heard my prayers after all.' So I rushed on enough clothes to go to the door in, and I fetched in the bundle, and when I unpinned the shawl, sure enough there was a baby. A real live baby, rosy and fat, and warm in spite of the hard frost outside."

"And that was Lily?"

"That was Lily, sure. I took her to my heart that day, sir, and she 's had the biggest corner of it ever since, though nowadays maybe she don't think so. But

that 's all 'cause of the drink, which I own do get the best of me at times. But then what 's a lone widdy to do, with times so hard, and growin' harder day by day? It 's enough to drive a saint to drinkin' holy water, and that 's the truth."

She wiped away a tear with the hem of her dress, which she unhesitatingly lifted for the purpose, and Mr. Mitchel fearing that her emotion would interrupt her narrative, brought her back to the thread of her story by asking:

"Tell me how you came to name her Lilian Vale, Mrs. Cooper."

"Truly that was a strange part of it. I found a paper pinned to her little shirt, and on it was written VALE. As I could n't make out anything but a last name from that, I guessed that it must be the family name, though why they should take the trouble to tell that, when they was disownin' the child, was more 'n I could make out. But how she came to be Lilian was the strangest part of all. I was playin' with the baby, and havin' lots of fun with her, 'cause she was just the cutest and prettiest little angel you ever see, when there comes a message to tell me a friend of mine was dyin' and would I come over. Well, I did n't like to leave the baby by herself in my house, so I just carried her along with me to my friend's house. And what do you think?"

"I do not know. What happened there?"

"Why, just as soon as I took the baby to her bedside

and showed it to her, she let out a scream you could have heard a mile off. It was her baby !”

“ Her baby ? Impossible ! ”

“ That ’s what I said when she claimed it, but she would have it she ’d a right to know her own child, and I could n’t deny her that. So she told me the story, and it was just another proof of the way men treats us poor down-trodden creatures. She was an actress when I first met her. You must know I was better off in those days. I did n’t live in no such poverty-stricken neighborhood as this. I was in a good house in a good street, and so was my poor friend. She used to go off on long trips, and so I never thought anything if I did n’t hear from her in months. I never knew that she ’d had a baby till that day when she claimed the one I thought the Lord had sent to me. Nor I never had supposed she was married, which indeed it turned out she was n’t. But that day she told me the whole story. How she ’d met a rich young man, who was handsome and all that sort of thing. It’s always that way, you know. They’ve always got a fine face and a long purse. And their beauty fills our hearts, while their presents blind our eyes to the wrong we do. But you know all that without my tellin’ it to you. It seemed she ’d loved this man for three or four years, and then this little one came. She was awfully sick, and after weeks she was just gettin’ a bit stronger when he comes to her one night, that was the night before Thanksgivin’, and he

says to her, in a cold-blooded way, he says : ' Alice, my girl, what 'll we do with this baby ? ' And she ups and says, as brave as brass, ' I 'll keep it. ' He starts at that, and he says, ' But think what the world will say ? ' ' I don't care about the world, ' she answers, ' so long as you love me. ' Then he said the brutal words that killed her. You mark my words ! That man killed that poor girl. She was n't more 'n eighteen when he met her, and she was only twenty-two when she died. She paid dear for the little love he gave her. But I must tell you what he said. He took the baby from her side and he says, ' Let me see the little brat, ' and he looks at it a while and then he says : ' What do you call him ? ' ' It ain't a him, ' she says, kind of mournful, ' cause it hurt her to see the father did n't even know about his own child. ' ' It 's a girl, ' she went on ; ' I think I 'll call her Lily. ' ' Why Lily ? ' he says, with a laugh. ' ' Cause she 's so pure and sweet, ' says the mother. ' Pure and sweet, eh ? ' says the man ; ' well, she 'll lose all that as she grows big enough to understand what love is, just as her mother did. ' Now, I leave it to you, sir, did you ever hear of anything worse than that said to a woman ? For a man to ruin a girl, and throw her shame in her face like that when she was lyin' sick ! I calls it an outrage ! "

" And I agree with you most heartily, " said Mr. Mitchel ; " such a man should be made to suffer. "

" Oh, he will ! Never you fear for that. And look

you ! Would n't he suffer now, maybe, if he could know what you 've told me ? Did n't he lay a curse on that child, prophesying it would lose its purity ? And now she 's grown up, ain't his miserable words come true ? How would he like to know that ? He 'd be a beast if he did n't wince when he heard it. But after all, so many men are beasts, there 's no knowin'."

"Go on with your story, Mrs. Cooper. What happened next ?"

"Oh, it got worse after that. My friend began to cry, and he told her to 'shut her whimperin'.' Nice language, was n't it ? She tried to stop cryin', and was chokin' back her sobs that would get out some way, when he went at her again. 'Look here ! ' says he, 'I 've come here to-night to tell you something, and you may as well hear it now as later. You said you would n't mind the world so long as you had my love. Well, you 've lost my love, so that ends that ! You used to be a pretty girl, but you 've cried so much lately that your tears have washed away your good looks, and my love with it. So now that you understand that, perhaps you 'll think different about the baby. What do you say ?' My friend, she was just struck dumb, she was so stunned at what he said. But after a minute she made out to say : 'What do you mean ? What about baby ?' 'Well, to make it short,' he says, 'this baby is as much mine as yours, worse luck, and I don't mean to have it botherin' me in the future. So

I 'm goin' to take it away.' Then she cried, and she begged, and she got out of bed and went down on her knees and prayed to him. But he was stone deaf, and stony hearted. He just wrapped the baby up, and pushin' her away from him, he went out with it in his arms. She fell back in a faint on the floor, and when they found her, of course she was worse. And what 's more, she never got better again. She died two days later."

"But she had seen her baby again, thanks to you, Mrs. Cooper."

"Thanks to the Almighty Father you mean. Thanks, indeed! I never comes to a Thanksgivin' now but I offer up my praise, rememberin' what happened that day. For who but the Lord led that beast of a man to my door, to lay his bundle where it was best for it to lie?"

"No doubt you are right," said Mr. Mitchel. "You know what the Bible says—'Not a sparrow shall fall'!"

"Indeed I do, and many 's the time I 've thought of them self-same words. But that 's the way the child got the name of Lily, or Lilian, which is the proper way of puttin' it. Her own mother gave it to her."

"Strange! Her mother gave her her first name, and her father gave her her last," said Mr. Mitchel.

"Yes! But that was n't his fault. And he did n't give her his own name neither, which would have been more to his credit."

"You mean that his name was not Vale?"

“Indeed it was n’t, though I did n’t know that myself for years afterward. You see, in the excitement of findin’ my friend so low, and hearin’ that the baby was hers, I never thought to mention about the bit of paper with VALE on it, nor to ask her the name of the father, though I doubt if she would have told me. Women are strange that way. They let men deceive them, and trample them in the dust, and then they goes down to their graves keepin’ their secrets. It ain’t just. The men should suffer too, I say.”

“Did she tell you nothing about the father?”

“Oh, yes! Almost everything ’xcept his name. That she never breathed by no chance. But she told me he was rich and good family and all that. And she said he must have been crazy that night, ’cause he never treated her bad before. And she made all sorts of excuses for him, till you would have thought he was an angel. But you see, with her baby back to comfort her, and knowin’ she was goin’ to die, I suppose she found it easy like to forgive him. And near the last she give me a package of letters, and her ring; not a band ring, but a lovely diamond that he ’d given her, and she told me to keep the letters and the ring for her child, when she was old enough to understand.”

“Ah! This is fortunate. Have you kept the letters?”

“Sacred! I’ve kept both the letters and the ring. That was a trust from a dyin’ woman, and I could n’t break that. Why I’ve seen the day, many a time,

when I 've wanted bread, and could have had it by puttin' up the ring for a little money. But I never did. I was that fearful I might n't find the money to get it out again. Why, sir, not even the love of the drink has made me part with that diamond."

"You are an honest, good woman, Mrs. Cooper. Have you ever read the letters? Do they reveal the man's name?"

"As I told you before, I did n't find out about the right name for several years, and by then the girl was known as Vale, so I never changed it. But the letters was from him, and while some was only signed with one name, and some only with initials, there was one or two had the full name."

"And what was that?"

"I can't rightly tell you, because it 's so long since I read the letters, and my memory ain't what it used to be. But I 'll give you the letters and the ring, and you can do what you think is best for my Lily."

She went to a trunk, using a key on a ring that must have contained the keys of every article of furniture that she had ever possessed, and handed to Mr. Mitchel a packet containing a few letters in faded envelopes, and also a small ring-box, within which glittered a diamond of first water, as Mr. Mitchel saw at a glance.

"Before I open these," said Mr. Mitchel, "there are one or two more questions that I would like to ask. In the first place, tell me, does Lily resemble her mother?"

"She's her mother's livin' image. I was only thinkin' of that this mornin' when she was here. She's just as old now as her mother was when I first met her, and I could almost see my old friend standin' before me."

"Is she like her in other respects?"

"She's got the same talent for singin' and dancin' and she seemed to take to the stage as natural as can be. Then she's got the same easy-goin', simple, affectionate nature. That's been the ruin of her as well as her mother, I'm afraid. It don't do for women to give their love too easy in this world."

"Did you ever meet this man Morton, to whom she was supposed to be married?"

"Oh! So it's Morton she's fell in love with, is it? Oh, yes, I've met him, and I owe him a grudge. It was him as persuaded my Lily to leave me and go to live by herself. I see now why that was. He wanted her more to himself; some place where I could n't keep my eye on him. The schemin' villain that he is! But I never trusted him, and I often warned Lily that he was no good."

"Ah! Then you and he were not fond of each other?"

"Fond of each other? Well, I should say not. Why I despised him, that's what I did. I never took to him from the first. He never seemed to be what he pretended. So he's the man? Well, then, I'll tell you one thing, and you'll find I'm right."

“What is that?”

“I ’ve done my girl a wrong. I said just now that she ’s inherited the bad in her from her parents. Maybe she has inherited her mother’s weakness, but I ’ve never seen nothin’ in her that made me think she had any of her father’s wickedness. So if her baby was abandoned, be sure it ’s no doin’ of hers. It ’s the man as done it. And you ’ll find I ’m right.”

“Lily denies that she knew anything, but she also declares that the father had no hand in the crime.”

“Ain’t that like her mother? What did I tell you? She makes excuses for the man, but you ’ll find he ’s the villain after all.”

“Did you ever meet a man known as Slippery Sam?”

“No; I only know he had a room off and on in the house in Essex Street, where Lily lived. He was a crook, I think.”

“Yes, you are right. Then perhaps you know Preacher Jim?”

“Why everybody knows him. He ’s a crank—touched in his head, you know—but he ’s a good man for all that.”

“A good man? Why, is he not a criminal?”

“Oh, he says he is, but nobody knows any wrong he ever done. He ’s done lots of good, that I know for certain. He ’s helped the sick and poor around about, and he is awful fond of children. He ’s been good to Lily, givin’ her apples and candy and such like, since

she was a little girl. Oh, there 's no wrong in Preacher Jim, 'xcept in his mind, and that 's the crookedest part of him, I guess. But see if you can find the name in the letters."

Mr. Mitchel looked them over, and very soon came to one, at the bottom of which was a full signature. He started upon reading it, and uttered an exclamation.

"Do you know who it is?" asked Mrs. Cooper.

"Yes! I do know the man. What is more, I know where to find him, and I will find him within the hour!"

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

LEAVING Mrs. Cooper's, Mr. Mitchel hurried back to the rooms of the Metropolitan Foundling Society, and was glad to learn that Colonel Payton had not left. He sent in his card, and within a few minutes the two men were alone in the Colonel's private office.

"Well, Mr. Mitchel," began the Colonel, "back again so soon? Changed your mind about that girl upstairs?"

"In what way should I have changed my mind?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"Oh, well, you were rather impulsive this morning, and espoused her case pretty warmly, I thought. You said you would take the responsibility of keeping the matter from the knowledge of the authorities, and that's a serious business. I did not know but that after maturer consideration you had altered your views—come to your senses, I should call it."

"You mean that in your opinion it would be the proper course to give this girl into custody? To abandon her to her fate?"

"There you go again with your stupid sentimentality. Abandon her to her fate, indeed! And why not, pray? What fate awaits her but what she richly deserves?"

"Colonel, your Society is in existence for the protection of children. Would it not be cruel to have this young girl arrested?"

"That is not our affair. Women cease to be children when they become mothers. In this case it is the cruelty to the infant that we must consider!"

"Ah! The abandonment of the baby is the paramount thought in your mind?"

"It is, most decidedly. We are the guardians of those who are defenceless because of their immature years."

"Then you believe that a person who abandons a baby should be punished."

"I do! It is the law, and I am a stickler for the letter of the law. Without laws, and their strict enforcement, society must suffer. Therefore, the guilty must be punished."

"Regardless of sex?"

"Assuredly! Men and women must fare alike. In the eyes of Justice the evil-doer is sexless."

"I have heard that Justice is blind, but I have never been told before that she is also heartless. I think too that you are wrong, for Justice is typified by a female figure. Assuredly then, even in the name of Justice, I may plead for one of her sisters?"

"Look here, Mitchel, I hope you have not come here

to repeat all that rubbish which you talked this morning. I thought that perhaps you had been making further investigations."

"You are right. That is what I have done."

"Then what have you discovered? Nothing to the girl's credit, I 'll wager."

"Nothing to her discredit, I assure you. But, Colonel, before I tell you the story, which I have heard, I would like to ask you why you seem to be so particularly bitter against this girl?"

"I am not! I treat her just as I would any other delinquent. What an extraordinary question for you to ask! You practically charge me with showing prejudice against a woman who is entirely unknown to me. You use odd language, Mr. Mitchel. What do you mean?"

"Pardon me, Colonel, I meant no offense. But you tell me that the girl is a stranger to you. Somehow I had entertained the idea that perhaps you had seen her before?"

"Never, sir! Never! That is another preposterous suggestion on your part. I would have you remember, that I do not select my associates from that class."

"Well then, perhaps the girl's face seemed familiar to you. Perhaps she reminded you of some one?"

At these words the Colonel started, and then grew quite angry. Rising from his chair, he towered over Mr. Mitchel who remained seated and looked up at him calmly.

"What do you mean, sir," cried the Colonel, "by your insinuations? How dare you come to my own office and presume to catechise me in this way? If you hope to help your pretty little friend by your impertinence, you calculate wrongly, sir. I am not the man who puts up with that sort of thing. I have half a mind to kick you out, sir."

"I am glad you have only half a mind, for ~~that~~ makes it possible for the other half of your mind to dissuade you from such a foolish project. It would be very unwise for you to dismiss me unheard."

"Unheard, sir? Then why the devil don't you speak? Why are you beating around the bush in this way? Come to the point, sir, come to the point!"

"I will do so," said Mr. Mitchel, rising and facing his companion. "It will after all be the best way, perhaps. Well then, Colonel, to make it short, I will ask you to recall the day when I first came here and saw the infant."

"I do, quite distinctly."

"Two things I will mention. You may remember that we had a little discussion regarding the proper treatment of those who abandon their children. I advocated the plan of compelling the parents to care for their offspring."

"And I told you, you were a fool. I have not changed my mind!"

"I afterwards told you that I would prove the feasi-

bility of my theories by discovering the father of this infant, and compelling him to support his child."

"Yes! You did talk some such nonsense. Well, what of it?"

"I have partly kept my word. I know who the father is."

"Yes! I heard her tell you his name. That in itself proved to me that the girl is thoroughly bad. Why even the worst woman will keep the name of her lover a secret."

"I discovered more than that, Colonel. I know who the grandfather is."

"Why, naturally! The father being known to you, you easily go back another generation."

"I am not speaking of the man's father, but of the girl's."

"Oh! Her's! But I thought you said she was a foundling?"

"Exactly! Her own father abandoned her, and I have learned his name."

"Well, who is he? Why make a mystery about it?"

"All in good time, Colonel. You will see my point in a moment. Now, as a man experienced in these matters give me your opinion. Suppose that it could be proven that this girl was truly guilty of abandoning her babe; then suppose that in her behalf I argued that she herself having been cast adrift by her parents, became a double victim. First, of her heredity, which made her congenitally deficient in parental instincts; and sec-

ondly, of her environment, a bad one, into which she had been thrust by her father. Would not all this lessen her responsibility ? ”

“ No, sir ! Not in the eyes of the law. Of course I know what you are driving at. You have been reading some of the new-fangled notions of the criminologists of to-day : men who would like us to open the prisons and release all the criminals, to prey upon the world. But I am astonished that a man of your intelligence should adopt such fanatical and revolutionary ideas.”

“ We will not discuss views at present, Colonel. Let us keep to the case in hand. You think, then, that in spite of the girl's heredity, and regardless of her environment, she should be held responsible ; and that if guilty, she should be punished ? ”

“ I do ! Such people must be made an example to others, if we would lessen that class of crime.”

“ And what of her father ? He is living yet. A man of good heritage and exceptional environment. Yet he committed the same crime. What of him, Colonel ? ”

“ Why of course he ought to be punished likewise, though evidently this occurred so long ago, that I doubt if anything could be done at this late day.”

“ I thank you for your candid opinion. Now we will go back, if you please, to my first visit here. You may recall the fact that the matron suggested that you should adopt the child ? ”

“ The silly speech of a silly woman.”

“Yes ! But it gave me an idea. She also expressed the opinion that the shape of the hands are an evidence of the breeding, and claimed, as she put it, that this particular infant had ‘blue blood’ in its veins. Now follow me, Colonel. These words had just been uttered when you leaned over the crib and the baby grasped your thumb. Thus her hand and yours were brought together.”

“Well !”

“I noted a peculiar crook,—it was scarcely a deformity, though quite marked ; a curious curvature of the little finger of the baby’s hand. And, strangely enough, Colonel, I observed identically the same peculiarity in your little fingers.”

“Do you dare to insinuate, sir, that I—” The Colonel was so angry that he fairly bellowed, but Mr. Mitchel interrupted him, and calmly added :

“That you are the child’s father ? Not at all, Colonel. The idea never even occurred to me. But I will tell you what I did think. The fact that you, an aristocrat, could have such a deformity, proved conclusively that it was not impossible that this waif, with her crooked finger, might have blue blood in her veins as the Matron suggested.”

“Oh ! That was your deduction was it ? Well, go on ! Go on, sir ! Come to an end ! I am tired of this affair.” The Colonel mopped his forehead, and seemed mightily relieved.

"You will know all in a few moments. I shall not weary you with the details of my investigation. Suffice to say, that I traced the infant to its mother, though, as you are aware, I was forced to bring the two together before I could obtain the latter's confession. In the mother, however, I found that which greatly emphasized the value of the crooked finger as evidence. Her little fingers are similar to her child's, and to yours, Colonel. That is the point, do you see it?"

This time the Colonel did not bluster. There was that in Mr. Mitchel's voice which indicated that he spoke from knowledge, rather than from mere presumption. Therefore the Colonel asked in a low tone :

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, Colonel Payton, that Lilian Vale, the Lily of the Valley as she is called ; this girl for whom you think a prison is a fitting home ; this girl whose heritage and environment are in your mind no palliation to her offense ; this girl whose infant was cast away among the tombs of the dead, is——

"Is what?" cried Colonel Payton.

"Is your own daughter!" declared Mr. Mitchel.

"It is false!" cried the old man in a voice tremulous with excitement.

"Denial is useless, Colonel. You damned your own child, with a curse, which has come at your bidding. You prophesied that this babe whose mother called it Lily, would lose her purity as soon as she should learn

to understand the meaning of love. Well, Colonel, your daughter was a mother at sixteen. What say you?"

"Nothing! Nothing! I do not know where you have heard this story! Nor why you bring it to me!"

"One more fact will convince you. You took the child from its mother, and wrapping it in a shawl you carried it to a convenient doorstep, where you left it. But you pinned on its little dress a scrap of paper, on which you wrote the letters V-A-L-E. The ignorant woman who found the child interpreted this to mean Vale, the family name, though she marvelled that a parent would abandon a babe, yet disclose its name. But she was ignorant of Latin. When you wrote those letters you meant them to stand for the Latin word *Vale*, farewell, did you not Colonel? You thought to bid farewell to your sin, to your past, to blot out all, and begin anew? Am I not right?"

"Yes! Yes! I confess all. My God! My sin has found me out. But I was young, I was tempted, I was——"

He ceased suddenly, and stood up erect, transformed in a moment from a coward to a brave soldier. Then he continued in firmer speech:

"No! I have no excuse to make. I was a villain. But since then I have been a soldier, and if I am ready to condemn others, I am as willing to confess my own fault. I accept the responsibility of my sin. You said you would find the father of the little one, and com-

pel him to support his child. You have also discovered its grandfather ; the father of another abandoned child, and you shall also compel him to do his duty. Mr. Mitchel, I will acknowledge my daughter before the world. I will take her, and her poor little baby to my heart and home, and guard and protect them. Are you satisfied ? ”

“ I am overjoyed, Colonel,” said Mr. Mitchel, grasping the older man by the hand. “ You see, when you are forced to decide what real justice is, you adopt my theory. I am not sure, however, that I would advocate the course which you suggest. We must think it over. Whatever is best for the girl must be our chief consideration.”

“ You are right, you are right ! I place myself entirely in your hands.”

“ Then there is not a moment to be lost ! The man who has wronged your daughter has also won the heart of another, whom he seeks to wed. He has urged her to elope with him to-morrow. If she should yield your daughter’s fate would be sealed.”

“ I see ! I see ! You wish to carry out your theory ! You wish him to marry my child ! That may not be best for her, but you would argue that the child’s interests demand such a course. Perhaps you are right. These ideas are all new to me. You must forgive me if I find it difficult to set aside my own. I cannot help wishing to have the villain behind the bars.”

"No, no, Colonel! That would ruin your child as well as his. It is not to be thought of. Your daughter loves the man, and we must hope that she will win him after marriage, for married they must be. But now, Colonel, if I am to accomplish this, you must frankly answer a question that I am compelled to put, however painful it may be. Will you do so?"

"I am entirely at your commands. I will not flinch."

"Well, then, tell me this. Did you not have another child?"

"Yes!" said the Colonel, in low tones and with a bowed head.

"Also a girl?"

"Yes!"

"The same mother?"

"Yes!"

"By heavens! I knew it! The next thing to be done is to trace that child, and we have but twenty-four hours. It seems hopeless."

"It may not be. That baby was born in a Maternity hospital. We could go there. Perhaps their records might tell us what you wish to know."

"This is fortunate. I feared that she was another foundling. Come, we must visit that institution at once."

They had not far to go, and were ushered into the presence of the house physician, a young woman, whose face was made lovely by her sweet sympathy for her

sorrow-laden patients. It was quickly explained to her that a father sought his child, wishing to offer her his love and protection. On this statement, access to the records was at once granted, and without difficulty they found the name under which the mother had been received. There also was a record of the birth and sex of the child, whilst in the last column, written in red ink, appeared the significant word, "Adopted," followed by the date.

"By whom was she adopted?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"Ah! Of that we keep no record," said the Doctor.

"Do you mean that a child, intrusted to your care, is allowed to pass thus completely from your supervision?"

"No! It is not so bad as that. But we deem it best that the name of a person who adopts a child should be kept from possible ill-wishers. We receive patients here without demanding their real names, purposely that the children may not be too easily traced. This is our idea of the truest charity. So also we make no registry of those who take children away. The adoption may be as secret as the new parents may desire. All this for the child's sake."

"But how do you know that these children may not be ill-treated?"

"Oh, we do not lose sight of them, but their whereabouts is known to but two persons; our Matron, and one other lady, a patron, one of our board of directors. We have two persons in the secret, fearing that

were there but one, her death would break our connection with our charges."

"Oh, then I am to understand that your Matron may know where this child is?"

"Yes! Perhaps she will see you. I will explain your desire to her."

Five minutes later a woman entered. One of those whose faces teach us that even the very old may be beautiful. Perhaps long years of kindness to others had in some way created in her face a moral beauty whose purity was reflected in her countenance.

"Here is a mother to all the motherless!" thought Mr. Mitchel.

"You wish to speak to me, gentlemen?" said she, in a voice as gentle as the flow of a rippling brook.

"We wish very much to trace a child who has been adopted from this institution," said Mr. Mitchel. "This gentleman is her father."

"Yes! The Doctor has told me of whom you seek information. I do not mean to be unkind, but this is a profound secret which you wish me to divulge. I cannot without good reasons disclose it even to the father, who comes after his child so late. I must first consider the interests of the girl."

Mr. Mitchel found himself in a quandary. It would be impossible to disclose his purpose to this old lady. She would very properly hesitate to accept his story without investigation, and that would entail a delay, which

would entirely upset his plans. He deemed it best, therefore, to resort to circumlocution.

“But suppose that I tell you that this gentleman is rich? That he can give his child a very luxurious home?”

The Matron smiled as she answered :

“She has every luxury now that money can buy. She has more than that, the love of a mother who worships her. Her adopted father is dead, and he has bequeathed five million dollars to her.”

Both men started in amazement. What a fortune for an outcast ! What a difference between her fate and her sister's. But Mr. Mitchel was much pleased and replied :

“You seem to keep a fairly accurate knowledge of your charges, even after they leave you. Why, it is nearly eighteen years, is it not?”

“The girl is quite as old as that, but we have a regular system. The parents are required to report to us regularly, and occasionally to send us a photograph. In this way we have some corroboration of what they write us. If the children are not well cared for we often detect it by a comparison of their pictures, taken from year to year.”

“Then you have this girl's photograph also?”

“Yes, indeed ! Many of thei

Mr. Mitchel now endeavored to gain his point by

strategy. Taking a photograph from his pocket, he suddenly held it before the old lady and asked ;

“ Do you recognize that ? ”

“ Why it is—— ”

The Matron was taken by surprise, yet so careful was she of her secret, that she stopped before mentioning the name which had risen to her lips. But Mr. Mitchel was satisfied, and completed the sentence for her :

“ It is Perdita ! ” said he.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN APPEAL TO THE HEART.

THEY had scarcely left the Maternity Hospital when the Colonel evinced his impatience to know more of his other daughter.

“Mitchel,” he exclaimed, “In heaven’s name do not keep me in suspense. You evidently know who and where my other child is. Tell me all at once !”

“It is most extraordinary, Colonel,” said Mr. Mitchel, “and most painful. The simple fact is that the father of that abandoned baby, the lover of your younger daughter, is contemplating an elopement with your elder child.”

“Impossible ! You cannot mean it ! God would not permit such an outrage ! To abandon my little Lilian and her child, and to marry her sister ? It would be too horrible !”

“Ah ! But the man does not know of the relationship. Who would guess that such a link connects the Fifth Avenue palace, with the slum tenement ? And yet,” he added, musing, “it seemed so very obvious, that I wonder how it could have escaped the man’s notice.”

“What was so obvious? Mitchel, you knew, or suspected the truth before we visited this institution. Our visit merely confirmed your expectations. Tell me how you made the discovery?”

“Come into this *café*, Colonel, and I will give you ten minutes, which is all the time that I dare to waste. We can talk in here comparatively undisturbed.”

They went into the *café* taking seats at a table in a secluded corner, and after ordering some wine, Mr. Mitchel proceeded :

“My story is most singular, yet it shows that we should be very careful in criticising a work of fiction. How often do we read a tale and thrust it aside with the exclamation, ‘Bah! How improbable!’ Yet within twenty-four hours, our newspapers may report a similar series of events, in actual life. The remarkable similitude of two sisters, or brothers, has been a common theme with novelists, who usually endeavor to make the likeness seem more probable by telling us that the children were twins. Yet see what I have found in real life. During my investigation of this affair, I found a photograph which immediately attracted my attention ; partly because of the extreme beauty of the face, but more especially because it seemed so familiar to me. This, despite the fact that I was sure that I had never seen the original, Lilian Vale.”

“Ah! Then it was her picture which you showed to the Matron?”

“No, Colonel! Hear me out! I carried the picture in my pocket and looked at it from time to time, becoming more and more convinced that somewhere I had seen the face before. At length I remembered. There was in my own home another photograph, the likeness of a young woman who had taken a great fancy to my little daughter at school, from which circumstance had sprung up a slight acquaintance between our families. I compared the two, and anyone would readily believe that they are from the same original. Yet one was a child of poverty, Lilian Vale, and the other an heiress to millions, Perdita Maria Van Cortlandt.”

“And you mean that Perdita Van Cortlandt is my child?” gasped the Colonel. “Why—Why, man! The Van Cortlandts are my intimate friends. Gabriel Van Cortlandt served in the same regiment with me, in the army, and I was at his side when he died two years ago. What is more—for you may as well have the whole story now—I—I—I loved Gabriel’s wife before he married her. I never told her, because I was not rich enough to woo her. So Gabriel found me no obstacle to his suit, and I remained friends with both, preferring to keep my secret. The years passed; but the pain in my heart would not die. I went into the army, hoping to forget the past, yet within two months chance brought Gabriel and myself together, and we remained comrades throughout the war. And now I learn that by a strange decree of fate one of my deserted children was given into the

care of the woman for love of whom I have remained a bachelor, while the other, with her own baby has drifted into the care of the Society which my conscience has forced me to aid to the extent of my means. What a strange world ! What a strange world ! ”

He looked off into space for a moment or two, his wine glass poised half-way to his lips. Then he drank the contents to the last drop, and turning to face Mr. Mitchel, he inquired :

“ Have you the two photographs ? I would like to see them.”

Mr. Mitchel drew out an envelope from which he took two cabinet photographs, which he handed to the Colonel, remarking :

“ Examine them closely, and you will see that the resemblance is so great that no one could escape noting it.”

“ Marvellous ! Marvellous ! ” exclaimed the Colonel, “ but there is something I do not understand. In the first place these are the likenesses of children, and secondly, this one which you say is Perdita, does not greatly resemble her.”

“ Let me make it all clear to you. If you see Lilian and then visit Perdita you would be able to detect the great likeness that they bear to one another, yet were they brought together I have no doubt that it would be easy enough to distinguish them. Yet, as you see, their pictures are as nearly alike, as two photographs of one per-

son might be. Lilian's photograph was taken two years ago, when she was only fourteen, hence its extremely youthful appearance, though she herself looks scarcely older now. This other picture, Perdita's, was taken when she also was fourteen. This explains the reason of the greater resemblance between the portraits, than there ever will be between the originals, one of the girls being older than the other. I have often observed when looking through an album of portraits, that this rule holds. There may be many children in one family all quite different in features, yet a great likeness is observable among the photographs taken in their babyhood or childhood. Thus it was, that the accidental possession of a photograph of Perdita at fourteen, with which I could compare that of Lilian at the same age, led me to the conviction that such a resemblance could only exist between children of the same parents."

"Yet it still seems marvellous. And to think that that scoundrel should have won the affection of both of my girls. It is remarkable."

"Why so? Moulded as they are, so nearly alike, it is not unnatural that they should admire the same man. But there is no time for speculation. I must act."

"What is your plan?"

"I have none. That is to say, I have not definitely decided upon anything except the end which I have in view. The details must be made to conserve my final purpose, and they must be as circumstances may de-

mand. All that I can say is, that I intend to save both girls from the fatality which hangs over them. I must now hurry home to dinner. To-night my wife and I will call upon the Van Cortlandts."

"Ah! You are going there? So will I. I will meet you there. My visit to-night will have a new meaning, a greater interest for me. A new thought is in my mind, an idea arising from the past, where I supposed I had laid it away forever. Perhaps the old dream may be revived. It may be the best solution of the problem of the future. It may be that after all, at the crisis of my child's career, I may give her a father's love, and do so without disturbing her faith in her mother by unfolding the truth. The past is bitter, and the present hangs heavily upon my soul, but, my friend, the clouds may part, and sunshine and happiness may be mine even at the end of life. At all events I owe you much. You have brought me to a full recognition of the wrong that I have done, and have shown me the path by which I may make some reparation. Above all, you have taught me that Justice may be tempered by Charity."

"Justice and Charity are twin sisters, Colonel," said Mr. Mitchel, "and should go hand in hand through life. Good-bye, until to-night. I trust that your hopes may be realized. It may be best for Perdita. Poor girl, the next few hours will be hard for her."

The two men grasped each other's hands warmly, and at that moment was born a friendship which never died.

At the Van Cortlandt residence two women were seated at the dining table, both silent, and each mechanically partaking of the food set before her, but so deeply lost in thought as to be oblivious of her surroundings.

The elder woman, Mrs. Van Cortlandt, wore that look of serenity which distinguishes one who has lived an uneventful but easy life. If any sorrows had come, they had proved but temporary, for in the abodes of luxury sorrow is an unwelcome guest, and is soon dismissed. The bitterest tears that flow from human eyes cause no abrasions on the lids if wiped away with fine soft linen. Yet the rich as well as the poor have hearts which may be restively discontented at times.

Mrs. Van Cortlandt was an excellent specimen of well preserved womanhood despite her advancing years, and the few streaks of gray which only made her luxurious growth of hair seem all the blacker from the contrast. She had been born of parents who boasted a lineage that reached back to the Crusades ; a family whose men had been loyal and true to country and to home, and whose women had been fair and chaste without exception, throughout the records of many generations. Moreover, she had been born to wealth which afforded every luxury that human heart could crave. All save one, perhaps, and with the perversity of life's fortune which is so common, despite her heritage, despite her wealth, the dearest wish of her heart had been denied her. She had ever been rather romantically inclined, a strange character-

istic when the phlegmatic temperaments of all the members of her home circle is remembered. Indeed, sentiment was so foreign to her home, that her own feelings had ever been held in check, hidden within her own bosom, and unsuspected by those who thought that they knew her best.

Once a flutter of hope had entered her heart. She had met one, around whom her fancy formed a halo, which transformed the man into a god. But the lover that might have been, was silent ; another, with a longer purse came into her life, and won the consent of her people even before consulting her ; the loved one made no protest, but offered conventional platitudes by way of congratulations, and so the dream faded, crushed out of her heart by maidenly resentment, and the fear that her unrequited affections might have been suspected. So this page of her life, the only one upon which a romantic paragraph had been written, was turned down, occasionally, at long intervals, to be opened and re-read.

Her marriage to young Gabriel Van Cortlandt, a scion of a family as aristocratic as her own, and with wealth that even exceeded her father's, had been one of the gay *fêtes* of a gay season in the Metropolis. The honeymoon being over, they had settled down to a home life in which the entertainment of the best people was the most conspicuous feature. Thousands envied the beautiful bride her possession of her handsome husband and her luxurious home. Yet once again wealth failed to

procure what her soul most sought. The years passed and no offspring blessed their union.

Disappointed in the first instance, she determined that in this second she should not be entirely unsatisfied. So plans were made, and details arranged, in which respect at least her money aided her; and when at length the arrival of the infant was announced, none doubted that a genuine Van Cortlandt had been born into the world; none but that honest old Matron at the Maternity Hospital, and that other woman, the patron of the institution, who had indeed suggested the scheme to the young couple, and had lent them her aid.

At the appointed time a closed carriage had been driven to the hospital, from which emerged two veiled women, who hurried into the building and were conducted into a private room, where they were joined by the Matron. In a few moments three tiny little bundles were brought in. One contained a boy baby.

"No! No!" said Mrs. Van Cortlandt. "I want a girl. The boy will be able to make his own way in the world when he grows to manhood. I wish to save one of these little helpless babies of my own sex."

Then the Matron showed two others, both girls. One was large, and round, and rosy; with eyes wide open and staring at those about as though inquiring why she had been awakened, for very wide awake she was. The other was tiny, and pale, and asleep, one arm hidden beneath her wrappings, the other limp and lying in view,

the fingers now stretched wide apart, now closing again into a little fist, that was anything but a weapon with which to fight the world. This nervous twitching of the hand was all that showed that she had been disturbed by removal from her crib.

Mrs. Van Cortlandt leaned over and looked at the children, glancing anxiously from one to the other.

“Which should she select?”

A question of vast importance to these two little ones. She gently grasped the twitching hand of the sleeping child, and immediately its nervous movement ceased, and it lay at rest. Her heart was touched as she thought that the contact with her own flesh had imparted peace to the sleeping babe. Then her eye fell upon the little finger and her heart beat faster. It was curiously curved. She remembered one other whose fingers were thus fashioned. A deep crimson flushed her cheek as she thought that this slight deformity in the child would keep fresh within her memory that one bright dream of her life, and hastily dropping her veil as she arose, she said simply:

“I select this one!”

Shortly after this, her husband had gone to the war, and she was alone with her new found treasure, which grew into her heart, till it became, as it were, a part of her being. Yet, to her great surprise, the longer the child lived, and the older it grew, the more faded and indistinct became the memory which she had thought that

the sight of the curved finger would keep green. In her love for the young girl, and her pride in the child's budding beauty, her own heart's longings were satisfied.

It puzzled her to think why she should have revived these memories to-night ; and therefore she sat silent at the table, musing over the unsolved problem.

“ Why does it all come back to me to-night ? ”

Is there any subtle truth in telepathy ? Did she unknowingly feel the impress of the surcharged thoughts which another mind was sending in her direction at this moment ?

And Perdita too was silent, thoughtful. But she lived only in the present. The past was a beaten track over which she need not dwell. The future a dim vista into which the young never look except with a gaze of hope, and a feeling of security.

“ All will be well ! ” say the young who look into the mirror of the Future.

But the present and the immediate morrow ! Of these Perdita thought much, thought deeply, and was troubled. What ought she to do ? What would she do ? Two questions which might have a single answer, or which might be treated quite differently.

“ What shall I do ? ” she asked herself a thousand times, “ I love him so. How can I let him go away without me ? How can I live without him ? How can I refuse to do what he wishes ? When a woman loves a man, should she not prove that love by making all sacri-

fices? Should she hesitate to give herself to him, at all hazards? No! No! I love him, I must go! To-morrow I will go! It is settled! I am so glad that at last I have decided."

At this moment, her mother, in her dreaming of the past, was bending over the tiny babe and observing the little finger lying at rest within her own hand. As Perdita looked up she met the loving gaze, and there was instantly a revulsion of feeling within her breast, as she lowered her eyes again.

"Mother! What would mother do?" she thought. "She loves me so. She would die if I left her. But other girls leave their homes? Yes, but somehow it is different with me and my mother. She loves more than other mothers love. And I love her too. We have always been so much to each other. No! no! I cannot go! Mother would die, and then I should reproach myself forever. A wife like that would be a burden to any man. So, I cannot go. The dream is over."

But she fell to dreaming again, and the burden of her dream was her love for Matthew Mora.

They had sat down to dine later than usual, and though the dessert was just brought on, both women were relieved to have their thoughts diverted by the sound of the bell. The butler announced Mr. and Mrs. Mitchel, and they went at once to greet their guests.

"We are so glad to have you come," exclaimed Mrs. Van Cortlandt, extending both hands in cordial

welcome to Mrs. Mitchel. "I hope this is a presage of a closer intimacy between our families?"

"Indeed, I hope so!" said Mrs. Mitchel. "You know our Rose is soon to make her *début* in society, and after that eventful occasion we shall be obliged to receive, more than in the past. But during her childhood we have lived rather quietly."

"My wife has felt the responsibility of rearing a young girl to be a heavy burden," said Mr. Mitchel, laughing. "She says that she will regain her freedom after the child is fairly launched."

"Yes, indeed I will," said Mrs. Mitchel. "Of course you know, Mrs. Van Cortlandt, that Rose is not our own child. That makes a great difference, don't you think? One may do as one pleases with her own, but to have the care of another woman's child; to wonder always whether you are doing as well as the real mother would have done makes the responsibility seem all the greater. But then, you can hardly be a judge of that, you who have been blessed with a daughter of your own. And such a daughter!" She added the last words turning graciously towards Perdita and smiling admiringly upon her.

Mrs. Van Cortlandt winced a little at these words, but showed nothing by her countenance, which had been schooled for many years to guard her secret. Before she could reply a servant entered and announced Colonel Payton, at which Mrs. Van Cortlandt rose to receive him, at the same time wondering that he of all men should

come on this night. What mystic connection could there be between her thoughts of him and his arrival? She dared not venture a reply, even to herself.

The Colonel entered with dignified ease and self-command, such as would be expected from the man of the world and the soldier that he was. Nothing in his manner betrayed that this was aught but the most casual call. Nor was there anything in the greeting between him and Mr. Mitchel from which one might have suspected that they had seen each other before on that day.

Advancing towards Mrs. Van Cortlandt, he bowed low as he said :

“My dear friend, I hope you will pardon me for having remained away from you for so long. It is almost a month I fear?”

“Five weeks, Colonel,” said the lady, laughing. “I fear time goes lightly with you, in your world of business and pleasure. We two women, alone in a great house like this, night after night, keep a better reckoning of the visits of our friends, do we not, Perdita?”

The Colonel was charmed to find that in the chronology of her heart she had noted the flight of time between his visits.

“Yes, indeed, mother,” said Perdita, advancing. “We always miss you, Colonel, when you remain away from us for a long time.”

“So, then, you too like to have me come?” The Colonel’s voice trembled a little, and it was with an

effort that he controlled himself. He admired the girl's marvellous beauty, and he wondered that he had taken so little cognizance of it hitherto.

"Ah, yes! Indeed we do like to have you here. Your interesting stories always make the evening seem shorter."

"So! Is the Colonel a romancer?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

All had taken seats again, Mrs. Mitchel having drawn Perdita to a seat beside her on the sofa. She felt a great pity in her heart for this lovely girl, who was but a child, for the relations which existed between herself and her husband were such that she always knew all of his affairs. In this one she had taken especial interest from the beginning, because of the incident of the abandoned baby. She was well aware, therefore, of her husband's object in visiting the Van Cortlandts, and indeed her own part had been assigned to her.

"Oh, the Colonel tells the most wonderful stories," said Perdita, replying to Mr. Mitchel.

"Why then, Colonel, I have learned this so late, that I cannot let another hour pass without hearing one of your narratives." Mr. Mitchel laughed pleasantly as he spoke. No one would have thought that there was any hidden motive in his words, when he added: "Tell us of your first love affair. I never knew of a bachelor who has not been in love."

The Colonel glanced swiftly at Mr. Mitchel, hesitated, and decided quickly.

"You are right!" said he. "I think a man seldom lives alone, from choice. Either no woman will have him, or the one whom he loves is beyond his reach."

"And how was it with you?"

"There is no romance in my case. It was most prosaic. I confess that I did love one woman, but I never thought it wise or opportune to tell her, so I lost her. She married another man, without having suspected how much I cared for her."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Mrs. Van Cortlandt, impulsively, and immediately after uttering the words she bit her lip in vexation for having permitted them to escape.

"Why, yes! How should she guess?" asked the Colonel, with the usual stupidity of a man, failing to understand the situation, which, however, Mrs. Mitchel, with a woman's instinct, instantly comprehended. She therefore quickly remarked:

"Why, my dear Colonel Payton, do you suppose for a moment that a woman must be told that a man loves her, ere she can herself discover the truth? Why, we are brighter than that. I'll wager that your sweetheart knew your secret, yes, perhaps before you suspected it yourself."

"But then, if that were true, why should she marry another man?"

"Because you did not speak, Colonel," replied Mrs. Mitchel. "A woman cannot wait forever for a man to

find courage. How stupid you are, Colonel, but then you are excusable on account of your sex."

She laughed lightly, but the thoughts which her words aroused in the minds of the others caused an awkward pause, which was only broken by Perdita's saying :

"You tell us a story, Mr. Mitchel. The Colonel is stupid to-night. I agree with Mrs. Mitchel."

"I tell you a story?" said Mr. Mitchel. "Well! What shall the subject be? About the little girl who gave the old hag a lift with her bundle and then found that the old lady was a fairy in disguise?"

"No! Tell me about your daughter Rose. I never knew before that she was adopted! How was it?"

"Ah, my dear, that is a sad story for such young ears. I am afraid that your mother would not approve."

"You are mistaken," said Mrs. Van Cortlandt. "I hold that the old notion that girls should be reared in ignorance of the world is not only wrong, but that such a course is absolutely sinful. Why should a girl be kept ignorant for years only to have her ears suddenly assailed by such a multiplicity of terrible tales as must shock her rudely? I have no fear of anything that you may think proper to relate to us. I also would be much interested to learn your daughter's history."

"I am glad to find a woman who has so much sense," said Mr. Mitchel. "You are *fin de siècle*, in the most refined meaning of the phrase. My little girl's story is a sad one, though the sad parts really happened before

she was old enough to know anything. She is really the child of a cousin of mine. He met a young Creole in our old home, New Orleans, and persuaded her to elope with him. The honeymoon lasted long, but in time the young wife was horrified to learn that her husband had contracted a previous marriage."

"What! The man had married before, and then had persuaded this girl to elope with him," exclaimed Mrs. Van Cortlandt. "What villainy."

"In this particular instance it was not as bad as it seemed at the time. He was the victim of an unscrupulous woman, who had married him while he was intoxicated, and then kept the matter a secret in order to blackmail him in the event of his marrying subsequently. Her fiendish scheme succeeded only too well. The wife died, and my cousin was finally driven insane by his disgrace and grief."

"Is not that a sad story?" said Mrs. Van Cortlandt. "But then, after all, the girl brought much of her trouble upon herself."

"In what way?" asked Mr. Mitchel.

"You said that she eloped, did you not?"

"Yes! What of that?"

"An elopement always implies a marriage away from home, and without the consent of parents or guardians, and therefore a girl who elopes proves herself ungrateful as well as selfish. She is ungrateful because she ignores her obligations to those who have cherished and cared

for her from childhood. She forgets the nights of anguish spent by her bedside, as they watched her through attacks of illness, and how her welfare was always their first consideration. She forgets that those who thus have served her through life, must have love for her in their hearts, and that such love creates an obligation. Then, as I have said, she is also selfish. She meets a man of whom she can know but little, seeing him only when he is aiming to appear at his best. She is attracted by the glitter and the sheen of the metal ; but how can she form an accurate judgment of its purity ? But something about him fascinates her senses, and she mistakes this new feeling for love. He importunes, and she yields, leaving home, parents, and real love behind, to follow this *ignis fatuus*. She may even have romantic notions and imagine that she is doing a praiseworthy action in sacrificing herself, her conscience, and her home, to prove the sincerity of her love. Nevertheless, there is nothing but selfishness in her act ; she goes, to gratify her own desires. Oh, no ! Mr. Mitchel, I have little sympathy with women who so far degrade themselves as to elope. There must be something radically wrong in a girl who would do so. Why, as much as I love my daughter here, I firmly believe that were she to attempt such a thing, I would——”

“No, no ! Mother ! Don’t say any more ! You do not know what you are saying ! Mother ! Mother ! I love you !”

This interruption was a surprise to Mrs. Van Cortlandt, who could not imagine why Perdita should thus cry out, and then rush across to her, throwing herself at her feet, hiding her head on her shoulders, and weeping bitterly.

“Perdita ! My child !” said Mrs. Van Cortlandt. “What does this mean ? Surely you cannot——”

She stopped, appalled at the idea which was forced upon her.

Mrs. Mitchel, sitting beside Perdita during Mrs. Van Cortlandt’s arguments against elopements, had readily comprehended how the words must affect Perdita. Deeply sympathizing with the young girl, she took her hand within her own, and pressed it tenderly, noting that it trembled greatly, in evidence of the nervous tension under which Perdita was endeavoring to control herself. Therefore, when the climax came, with that *finesse* which her husband so much admired, she said :

“Poor dear ! Perhaps she is tired out. Come, Roy, take me into the conservatory. I so much desire to see Mrs. Van Cortlandt’s orchids.”

Mr. Mitchel quickly divined his wife’s intention, and responded instantly to her proposal. Thus Colonel Payton was left alone with Mrs. Van Cortlandt and Perdita. It was a trying moment for him, and it caused him acute pain to witness the suffering of his own child, and to know not only that he could not claim a parent’s privilege, but that it was from his own abandonment of

this girl that the present scene had been made possible. Yet if not as her father, surely as an old friend, he might offer her words of sympathy. Therefore he raised her tenderly, and spoke to her.

“What is it, Perdita? Why do you weep? Has some one injured you? Has some one been tempting you to forget your mother, that you should be so moved by her words? Speak to us, Perdita? Tell us all about your trouble? What is it, my dear?”

Perdita looked up at him for a moment, and endeavored to speak, but suddenly again burst into tears, and turning from them both, ran out of the room. Mrs. Van Cortlandt looked after her wonderingly, not yet comprehending all that had happened, and then she said in a low tone:

“Poor child! I wish that her father were alive!”

The Colonel was deeply affected by these words, and leaning over Mrs. Van Cortlandt's chair, he hoarsely whispered:

“I will be a father to her, if—if you will allow me!”

Then, as though fearing that he had spoken too clearly, he also left the room. But he went in search of Perdita. He knew the house well, and readily found Perdita's room, and Perdita herself lying across her bed pouring out her heart-ache in passionate weeping.

Twenty minutes later he descended to the parlors again, and made a sign to Mr. Mitchel that he would

like to leave immediately. So adieus were said, and the visitors departed.

On the street Mr. Mitchel said :

“ Well ? ”

And Colonel Payton replied :

“ I do not understand it all yet. But she asked me to send this telegram for her. Perhaps you will know what it means ? ”

Mr. Mitchel took the bit of paper and read merely the address of Matthew Mora, followed by :

“ *Bon voyage !* ”

“ Yes, I understand ! ” said he. “ I will send this myself, Colonel ! ”

CHAPTER XIX.

MATTHEW MORA'S STATEMENT.

MATTHEW MORA did not receive the dispatch which Perdita had sent to him, because Mr. Mitchel deposited it in his pocket-book, and not in the telegraph office. Therefore he left the city on the midnight train. He was happy in the thought that Perdita would follow him twelve hours later. He had a section to himself, and he slept soundly, satisfied that success was soon to be his. Perhaps he would have had troublous dreams, had he seen and recognized the man who occupied a section at the farther end of the car, and who slept only between stations, starting up wide awake whenever the speed of the train slackened. But he knew nothing of this, and reached Boston in a happy frame of mind.

Perdita had expected to leave on the noon train, consequently in the furtherance of his own plans Mr. Mitchel took an express at ten o'clock. With him were Lilian and her baby, and Rebecca Polaski, whose presence had cost him a good deal of bartering with her avaricious uncle. Thus this party of four arrived in

Boston two hours before Matthew Mora would be expecting Perdita.

A suite of rooms at the Hotel Brunswick was engaged, and the girls were made comfortable. Then Mr. Mitchel called a bell-boy and commissioned him to inquire at the desk for the number of Mora's apartment. Ten minutes after obtaining this information, Mr. Mitchel tapped lightly upon the door, and in response to a hearty "Come in," he entered the room, and bowed to the much astonished occupant.

"Where the devil did you come from?" ejaculated Mora.

"New York!" said Mr. Mitchel. "May I take a seat?"

"Why have you come?"

"To attend your wedding!"

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Exactly what I said!"

"Look here, Mr. Mitchel, I am not a man to be trifled with!"

"Neither am I, Mr. Mora," said Mr. Mitchel, rising as the other advanced threateningly. "Think before you act rashly. I have not followed you from New York merely for amusement."

"Then why have you come? Answer me at once. I have no time to waste."

"Time is always precious, and never should be wasted. But I have already answered your question. I came to

Boston to be present at your wedding. Do you object to my being a witness?"

"You seem to know a good deal about my affairs," snarled Mora. "If I am to be married, as you say, perhaps you could enlighten me as to the identity of the bride?"

"You will be fully enlightened in due time. But first there are some matters to be set straight. Let me see. You expect Perdita Van Cortlandt to arrive by the noon train from New York, do you not?"

Although Mora should have been prepared by what he had already heard, he was staggered by these words, which proved that all of his plans were known to this man.

"How did you guess that?" he stammered.

"Oh, I never guess. It's a bad habit, common with detectives. I am not one, though you have perhaps confounded me with the class, because you met me with one. No! I never act by guess-work. It is knowledge with me, always. Accurate knowledge."

"It was impossible for you to acquire this knowledge. No one knew my plans except myself and—and the lady."

"And she did not betray you. Yet, the seemingly impossible often happens. By accident I was at Mrs. Van Cortlandt's house yesterday. Only a pair of *portières* separated us when you made the appointment with Perdita. So you see it was very simple."

"You contemptible eavesdropper !"

"I regretted my position very much. I would have preferred to walk into the room and disclose the fact of my presence to you. Once I was tempted to do so, but I refrained, because I did not wish to do you bodily harm, as I certainly should have done, had I confronted you at that moment."

"You are insolent. But I have no more time. Since you know that the lady is coming, you will pardon my going to meet her. She is a stranger in Boston, and the streets here are tortuous, as you are aware."

"Yes, quite so ; but you need not go."

"What do you mean ?"

"Perdita is not coming to Boston."

"You are mistaken. I know that she is. In fact I am positive of it."

"Well, one never should be too sure of anything in this world. Now, I happened to make a call at her house last night, and when I was leaving, Perdita intrusted me with a telegram which she wished me to send."

"A telegram ?"

"Yes. It was very short. In fact, only two words. *Bon voyage*, and it was addressed to you."

"Damn you, why did you not send it to me ? It would have——"

"It would have prevented you from coming to Boston ? Just so ! That is why I did not send it to you."

Mora glared fiercely at Mr. Mitchel for a moment, and then suddenly became calm again.

“Bah ! You can’t bluff me. You overheard that part of our conversation also. That is how you know the signal agreed upon in the event of her deciding not to follow me.”

“I did not send the dispatch last night, for the reason which I have given ; but now that you are in Boston I do not object to delivering the original. Perhaps you may recognize the lady’s chirography. Here it is.”

He handed the paper to him, and Mora took it nervously. He saw at a glance that it was genuine, and was for an instant overcome by his disappointment. Then he controlled himself again, and speaking as coolly as did Mr. Mitchel himself, he said :

“Very well ! Perhaps now you will allow me once more to ask you, why you have come here ?”

“Once more I reply, to be present at your wedding.”

Mora was puzzled by this reiteration, and contracted his brow in thought. Then a new idea occurred to him :

“Do you mean that—that Perdita has come after all ?”

“No ! I do not mean that. I am not alluding to Perdita when I speak of your marriage.”

“Then in the name of all that is wonderful, who is this mysterious woman who is to be my wife ?”

“Lilian Vale !”

"Lilian Vale?" cried Mora, recoiling. "Lilian Vale! You are mad."

"No, Mr. Mora. I am perfectly sane. I came to Boston to be present when you marry Lilian Vale!"

"Not if I know myself!"

"Ah, but perhaps you do not know yourself. Few men do. Listen to me, Mr. Mora. It is absolutely necessary that you marry this girl."

"But why? Why should I marry her? She is nothing but a little variety actress. Why, she is——"

"She is the mother of your child!" said Mr. Mitchel, impressively.

At this Mora dropped into a chair, fairly overwhelmed.

"You don't mind making assertions, do you?" he said at last, still attempting to brave it out. "I suppose you got that cock-and-bull story from her?"

"Not entirely. For example, she did not tell me your name. She calls you Morton. Yes, and for a short time she alluded to you as Matthew Crane. You will admit that it is suspicious for a gentleman to have aliases?"

"What proof have you that I ever used those names?"

"Come, come, Mr. Mora; you are not dealing with a child. You admitted to Mr. Barnes and myself that you called yourself Morton in your 'slumming' expeditions, and in the house in Essex Street. You also ad-

mitted that there was a Mrs. Morton in the same house. Then you sent a note to that Mrs. Morton, and also a carriage in which she drove away. Now, that same Mrs. Morton turns out to be Lilian Vale, and in your note you told her where to go, and instructed her to call herself Mrs. Matthew Crane. So you see I know everything."

Perceiving that further denial was useless, Mora laughed, and lighting a cigarette, put it jauntily between his teeth, and said :

"Well, what if it is all true? What are you going to do about it?"

"I am going to persuade you to marry Lilian Vale."

"I'd like to know how? It will take a good deal of persuasion, let me tell you."

"That will depend upon the quality of the persuasion. There are two kinds at my command : moral suasion, and force."

"Force? Force me to marry against my will? Mr. Mitchel, excuse the slang, but you make me tired."

"I will make you more than that before many minutes, young man. I will make you penitent, and obedient !"

Mr. Mitchel spoke sharply, and Mora took his cigarette from his mouth, and looked at him, puzzled.

"What do you mean?"

"First let me ask you a question. This girl was an innocent child when you met her. She loves you.

She is beautiful. Above all, she is the mother of your child. Will you marry her for these reasons?"

"No! I will not!"

"Then moral suasion fails, and you compel me to resort to force. I regret this, for up to this moment I looked upon you merely as the heedless, fast young man of the day. Now I know that Mr. Barnes's estimate of you is correct. You are a criminal."

"You are a liar!" retorted Mora, angrily.

"I pass that by," said Mr. Mitchel, "as idle words, which you cannot prove. Mine however are susceptible of proof. I repeat, you are a criminal; and I can prove it."

"I'd like you to tell me what crime I have committed, and then show me your proof."

"Very well. Now we approach our business in a business-like manner. You committed the crime of abandoning your infant, and the punishment is seven years in the penitentiary. What have you to say?"

"I say, rot! If you think you can prove that, you are mightily mistaken."

"We shall see!"

Mr. Mitchel touched the electric button, and when the hall-boy came, he gave him a note. While waiting, the two men sat silent, Mora smoking his cigarette and gazing insolently at Mr. Mitchel. Within ten minutes there was a tap on the door and Mr. Mitchel admitted Rebecca Polaski.

"Rebecca, you remember the story you told me about seeing the man who placed that baby in the graveyard?" said Mr. Mitchel.

"Yes, sir!" said the girl timidly.

"The moon shone brightly for a while, and you saw the man's face did you not? You saw it distinctly?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"You would be able to recognize that man if you should see him again, would you not?"

"I would know him anywhere."

"Very well. Stop looking at me. Look at that man sitting there. So! Tell me. Do you recognize him?"

Rebecca Polaski gazed fixedly at Mora, and he stared at her fearlessly in return. At length she spoke:

"No, sir. I never saw him before!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Mora boisterously. "What did I tell you? So you thought you had a witness to my crime did you? Well, you see you did lie, when you called me a criminal."

Mr. Mitchel was chagrined to find that Rebecca could not identify Mora, but he was stung into action by the sneering tone in which the younger man now addressed him. Turning to the girl he dismissed her, and then advancing towards Mora he said:

"Silence! You escape from this charge, but there is a greater one!"

"Murder, eh?"

"No, I have no proof of that, though Mr. Barnes

thinks he has. But do you realize that this girl whom you refuse to marry, this girl who is the mother of your child,—do you realize, I ask you, that she was only fourteen years old when you began to ensnare her with your wiles? Do you know that she is the daughter of Colonel Payton, one of the directors of the Metropolitan Foundling Society? Ha! That is news to you? But it is true. Now suppose that Colonel Payton, backed by that powerful Society should begin to prosecute you, do you think that all your millions would save you from the full penalty of the law, twenty years in Sing Sing?”

“Twenty years in Sing Sing! Heaven and earth!” exclaimed Mora, pale with fear.

“Heaven and earth will both be lost to you, if you do not comply with my wishes. You will be confined behind stone walls, and the Colonel will see to it, I promise you, that Executive clemency never reaches you until you have served your time in full. Do you not see that the only hope of escape is in the marriage which I suggest? Thus the law would be satisfied, the Colonel would be satisfied, the girl would be satisfied, and what is best of all, your own conscience would be satisfied.”

Mora had started from his seat, and was walking nervously up and down the room.

“You are right,” said he at length; “I will do as you wish!”

“Very well. So much, I knew that I could compel

you to promise. But I wish you to do more than this. I am really befriending you in this affair, and you should feel some obligation. Lilian is a sweet, good girl, despite her present position. What she is, her heritage, her environment, and your mischievous scheming have made her. But she is full of love for you, and she deserves not only to be your wife, but also to be cherished by you, and be made happy. Do you not see this yourself? Is there not one spark of manhood about you, which leads you to wish to make amends for the past, by brightening this girl's future? Do not marry her merely because I compel you to do so, but do so, if you can, from the prompting of your own better nature. Can you not do this?"

Mora was much touched, and hung his head a moment; then impulsively he exclaimed:

"I have been a villain. I see it all now. But I am not all to blame. I had no mother. She died when I was a child, and my father—well, you did not know him, that is all I have to say. But I will marry Lilian, and I will make her happy, as Heaven is my judge. And there's my hand on it—but stop. Perhaps you think that I killed my father?"

"If I thought so I should not allow you to wed this girl."

"I thank you! You are right! I did not kill the old man, though I had provocation enough, and perhaps even thought of it on the very night on which he was

murdered. He and I had a terrible row earlier in the evening."

"At Apollo Hall? Yes, I know about that. How did that end?"

"He had found out something about my place down town, and came after me to the dance. He asked me where the Essex Street house was, and I refused to tell him. Then he swore that there must be a woman in the case, and that he would find her and make trouble for her and me. With that he rushed off, and I went back upstairs to Lilian. I was talking with her again, trying to smooth matters out, when it occurred to me that he might come back and talk with the men about in the bar-room, Rogers especially, and that by bribery he might find out where my place was. Then if he went there, he would discover the baby, and heaven only knows what would happen. So I hurried up to the house, and when I got there the baby had disappeared."

"Disappeared?"

"Yes! No one could tell me anything about it."

"Do you think that your father took it away?"

"I did at first, but when I got back, I found that the old man had not come back, and that no one had talked with him about me. No one really knew anything except Rogers, and he did not meet my father at all. No, it is a mystery, unless Slippery Sam had a hand in it. That is the name of a 'crook' who had a room for a while in the same house."

“But why should Slippery Sam have done this?”

“Ah! That’s the mystery. He might have been paid for the job by the old man, but I don’t know. He was none too good for it, any way.” Mora spoke bitterly.

“Mr. Mora,” said Mr. Mitchel, “I believe your story, and I am satisfied that the only evil that you have done, is the great wrong to Lilian. I am glad that this is so, for you can repair it. Are you ready to marry her immediately?”

“If you overheard all of my conversation with Perdita, you must have heard me promise to have a clergyman here at the hotel. He ought to have been here, ere this. However, when he arrives I will be ready for the ceremony, if I am right in supposing that you have brought Lilian to Boston? You know you said you had come to be present at my wedding? She must be here, then.”

“She is downstairs. I will bring her to you at once, and also the baby, which you will be glad to know has been recovered.”

“You don’t mean it? I am delighted. Lilian loves the little one so much.”

“And you?”

“Oh, I am hardly acquainted with my little daughter yet,” said Mora laughing. “But make haste and bring my family to me!”

Mr. Mitchel laughed also and left the room.

Meanwhile the man who had followed Mora from New York, was below walking up and down the corridor of the hotel. This man was Mr. Barnes. He was watching the stairway, ready at a moment's notice to conceal himself, should Mora come down. Time passed slowly, but Mr. Barnes is a very patient man.

It was growing dark as the twilight approached. At last his vigil was to come to an end. Mr. Barnes's ear caught the sound of footfalls on the stairway, and at a glance he recognized the trousers of Mr. Mora even before the man came in full view. The detective dropped into a seat near the window and his face was instantly hidden behind a newspaper. The man who descended the stairway carried a satchel, and looked sharply about him, as though fearing spies. He paid his bill at the desk and hurried out. He seemed to be in great haste. Mr. Barnes followed him, and a few blocks farther on both men entered the railway station. The man bought a ticket for New York.

"Going home again, are you?" muttered Mr. Barnes. "Well, all the better. It will save the trouble of getting requisition papers."

So he too bought a ticket for the Metropolis, and refrained from attempting an arrest, preferring to shadow the man back to his own State. A train went out at six forty-five, and it carried these two men divided only by the length of a car. Shortly after midnight they reached New York, and the man hastily walked out of the depot

and hailed a cab. As he was about to enter, Mr. Barnes touched him on the shoulder, exclaiming :

“ Stop ! You are my prisoner ! ”

“ Why, what is the charge ? ” said the man stepping back to the pavement, and facing round so that the electric light fell full upon his face.

“ Mr. Mitchel, by all that ’s wonderful ! ” exclaimed the detective. “ How did this happen ? ”

“ Jump into my cab, and drive home with me. I will tell you all about it. Come, in with you ! ”

CHAPTER XX.

PREACHER JIM'S LAST SERMON.

MR. BARNES wished that he were back in Boston, but as that was impossible, his curiosity urged him to accept Mr. Mitchel's invitation, and consequently he entered the cab.

"I presume that you are astonished to find me wearing a suit of Matthew Mora's clothing?" said Mr. Mitchel, opening the conversation.

"I am not surprised that Mora should use that method for he has done it before," said Mr. Barnes; "but that you should consent to be his dummy, I confess does seem strange to me."

"Ah! Now you are allowing your chagrin to cloud your intellect. You know me better. I am no man's dummy. If I disguise myself, it is to further a purpose of my own."

"Well, let it go that way. I would like to know what purpose of your own is of sufficient importance to justify your aiding in the escape of a murderer?"

"None! But have I done that?"

"Unquestionably. Mora had taken passage in a ship

sailing for Europe early this morning. I fear now that it will be too late for me to stop him."

"I sincerely hope so ! "

"Then you admit that your ruse was to lead me astray, and so prevent my arresting this man ? "

"I admit that much. Yes."

"Do you not know that this is a state's prison of-fense ? "

"No ! What statute specifies that interference which prevents a usually astute detective from making an ass of himself by arresting an innocent man, is punishable by imprisonment ? "

"Mr. Mitchel, your words are insulting ! "

"They are not meant offensively, Mr. Barnes ; sometimes it is as necessary to use strong language to bring a man to his senses, as it is to administer drastic drugs to an ill patient. You have been troubled throughout this case with an affection of your mental eyesight, which has contorted all forms into a single image. Seeking the murderer of old Matthew Mora, you have been able to recognize no one as possibly guilty except the son. You have persistently followed your ancient methods of spying upon the suspected man, and you have converted every act of his into one thread of your fabric of evidence. Let me direct your attention right here to the great fallacy of such a course. If you watch a man, any man, all acts of his, not intelligible to yourself, become suspicious. If the man happen to be a criminal, this

fact is more conspicuously true. If, moreover, he knows that he is watched, his very efforts to escape from constant espionage, only emphasize the probability of your preconceived theory. But you overlook the important feature, that though a man may be a criminal, he is not necessarily guilty of the special crime for which the detective is seeking him. So it is with young Mora. He has acted criminally, but nevertheless, he did not kill his father."

"All that you say is true in theory, Mr. Mitchel, but be assured it is only theory in this instance. It does not apply to Mora. For once in your life, you have blundered. The man did kill his father. I have indubitable evidence of that fact."

"Oh, if you are so certain, of course I must listen to you. It will be the shortest way. Proceed with your evidence. How do you prove your charge?"

"Since I last saw you I have discovered several important facts. In the first place, there was a serious quarrel between father and son, on that very night, at Apollo Hall."

"I know that!"

"You do?" exclaimed Mr. Barnes, surprised. He had counted upon this as a telling point. However, he added: "Well, did you know that the two men came to blows? That this exemplary son, whose cause you espouse so warmly, struck his father a blow which knocked him down?"

"No!" admitted Mr. Mitchel. "I did not know that."

"I have two competent and trustworthy witnesses to that fact. After striking his father, Mora then returned to the dancing hall, while the old man went off breathing vengeance, and swearing that he would kill his son if the latter should dare to return home. What do you say to that?"

"Of course a quarrel is frequently the antecedent to a killing, but the bare fact that there has been a quarrel, does not prove that murder was a consequent result. From your own statement, it was the father who uttered the threat. Had the son been killed, your evidence would have more point."

"You are not easily made to yield up your own opinions. Let me give you my best proof. You recall the valet, who put on his master's clothing in order to tempt me to follow him?"

"No! No! Mr. Barnes. Give the devil his due. The clothing was put on the valet, merely as a pretended ruse. You were expected to detect this, and to deduce therefrom that the master himself did not wish to be tracked. As was planned, you did not follow the valet, and therefore he was enabled to carry out his master's wishes."

"That is of no consequence now. I have learned that this man is himself a well-known crook."

"I know that."

"You seem to know everything," said the detective,

testily. "But you cannot know this. I have had that man arrested and detained as a witness in this case. He has given important evidence."

"Against whom?"

"Against Mora, of course. He declares that he was aroused by the noise of the struggle between Mora and his father, and that hurriedly dressing himself, he reached his master's room just as the latter returned to it. Mora was much agitated and was attired only in his shirt and undergarments. This accounts for the blood upon his wristband, and you see fits very well the theory advanced by your crank Preacher Jim."

"Very well, indeed," said Mr. Mitchel. "Anything more?"

"The valet further declares that he assisted Mora to dress again, and saw him leave the house attired in the plaid suit, exactly in accord with the story told by the watchman. What do you say now of your friend?"

"That I am glad he is out of reach of your blunders!"

"How? Not yet convinced of this man's guilt?"

"It is impossible for me to think a man guilty, when I know him to be innocent. You note my words? I know him to be innocent."

"You cannot know what is untrue!"

"Certainly not. But I know this man is innocent, because I know who is guilty."

"You know who is guilty?" exclaimed Mr. Barnes, more astonished than ever.

“Yes! But here we are at the house. Come in, and I will make it all clear to you.”

They left the cab and ran up the stoop, but before Mr. Mitchel could fit his latch-key into the lock the door was opened by his valet, who had been waiting up for him.

“There is some one to see you, sir,” said the valet, at once.

“Someone to see me?” exclaimed Mr. Mitchel. “At this hour?”

“Yes, sir. He came at eleven, and said that he would wait. He insisted that you would be at home to-night.”

“But how could he know that, when it was by the merest chance that I did return?”

“I don’t know, sir, but he seemed certain about it. I thought best to sit up, too, as he’s a rather queer customer. He says his name is Preacher Jim.”

“Preacher Jim!” cried Mr. Mitchel. “This will be interesting, Mr. Barnes. Come with me. Where is he?”

“In the library, sir.”

Mr. Mitchel and Mr. Barnes went to the library, and were met by Preacher Jim, who advanced as they entered.

“You have come at last! I am glad that I waited, but relieve my suspense at once. Tell me. And so they are really married?”

“Of whom are you speaking?” asked Mr. Mitchel.

“Of Matthew Mora and Lilian—Lilian Vale.”

"Yes! They are married. How did you suspect this?"

"I did not suspect it, I knew it. Did I not tell you that our Society knows all that passes which is of interest to its members?"

"Yes! But that does not explain your knowledge of my movements?"

"Oh! You want details. They are uninteresting; mere routine. I knew when you left town, because I saw you go, taking Lilian with you. I also knew that Mora had gone, and that your friend here, Mr. Barnes, detective, had followed that young man. I did not care to play the spy myself, so I merely telegraphed to competent agents in Boston, and they kept you all in sight from the moment when you reached Boston. Two hours ago I received this telegram."

He handed a blue paper to Mr. Mitchel, on which were the words:

"Girl married. Mitchel returns in Mora's clothes. Barnes following."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Mr. Mitchel; "your agent was shrewder than Mr. Barnes, for he saw through my disguise."

"You have not explained that yet, and I am entirely in the dark about this marriage of which you speak," said Mr. Barnes.

Mr. Mitchel invited the two men to be seated, ordered some wine and cigars and then related all that he had

discovered about the abandoned baby, about Lilian and Mora, and finally about his visit to Boston.

“As I entered the hotel,” he continued, “I saw you, Mr. Barnes, seated near the window, your face concealed behind a newspaper. I hurried by, as I did not wish you to see me. After bringing Mora to the point of agreeing to marry, I took Lilian and the child to his room. It was a happy reunion, I assure you, and I am certain that the result will be equally so. Very shortly after, the clergyman arrived and the nuptial knot was tied. Then I took Mora aside, and explained the danger which awaited him down stairs. That in fact you would surely arrest him for his father’s murder, before he could leave town. He completely lost his nerve. Having just made full reparation for the only wrong of which he had been guilty, he was entirely overwhelmed by the new disaster which threatened. It was I, therefore, who advised him how to act. I made him divest himself of his clothing, in which I dressed myself, and I exchanged satchels with him. Then I hurried down stairs, making noise enough to attract your attention, Mr. Barnes, but keeping my face so turned that you would not see it. As I had expected, the satchel in my hand satisfied you that I was about to leave the city, and therefore you followed me. I presume you did not arrest me in Boston, because you thought it would save time to allow me to return to New York.”

“Yes! You completely outwitted me, Mr. Mitchel.

But I am still under the impression that you have made a grave error, that, in fact, you have assisted a murderer to escape. I have told you what convincing evidence I have !”

“Convincing evidence, which however leaves me unconvinced,” said Mr. Mitchel.

“You said in the cab, that you know who was guilty !”

“You know who is guilty,” exclaimed Preacher Jim.

“You know ?”

“Yes, Preacher Jim ! Yes, Mr. Barnes ! I know !”

“You think that it was Slippery Sam ?” inquired Mr. Barnes.

“No ! I do not think that, although I could tell you that which might lead you to believe so.”

“What do you mean ?”

Mr. Mitchel related the facts in connection with the discovery of Matthew Mora's will, and reminded them of their theory that it might have prevented the staining of one side of the pocket. He then produced the will itself, and showing them the blood upon one side of it, remarked :

“You see, we were correct. The murderer wore that plaid suit over his own clothing, and the blood soaked through. He thrust the will into his trousers' pocket however, and thus the blood-stains found there are accounted for.”

Mr. Barnes became greatly excited throughout this recital.

"Now we come to the point," he cried. "Your belief is that this will was placed in the pocket of Slippery Sam, on the night when he was killed, and that he himself knew nothing of it?"

"Bravo! Mr. Barnes! That is precisely my idea."

"Furthermore, you believe that the man who killed Mr. Mora, was the same who killed Slippery Sam?"

"Right again," said Mr. Mitchel.

"Then once more I have you," cried Mr. Barnes triumphantly. "It was young Mora who murdered Slippery Sam."

Neither Mr. Mitchel nor Preacher Jim seemed as much impressed by this statement as the detective had evidently expected they would be.

"That is a strange assertion," said Mr. Mitchel.

"All the circumstances point to it," said Mr. Barnes, determined to convince his hearers. "It was young Mora who owned those plaid trousers. The watchman saw him wear them in and out of the house. The valet corroborates the statement of the watchman. Preacher Jim here advanced the theory that the murderer might have been half-dressed and the plaid suit might have been put on afterward. This would account for all the stains, and fit the theory that the murderer wore the suit over his own garments. Mora would benefit by the loss of his father's will. Mora, therefore, having killed his father, abstracted the document, which he finally thrust into his pocket as he left the house.

Then he leaves this suit at the Essex Street house, knowing that Slippery Sam occupied a room there, and half designing to throw the burden of his own guilt upon the shoulders of a known 'crook.' Later he finds you, Mr. Mitchel, following up the case, and that you are on intimate terms with Slippery Sam. It became necessary to his safety to remove Sam. He did so."

"This is all very well up to the last statement. He did so, you say. But how do you prove it?"

"You may recall that I came upon the scene almost as soon as you did. I had been following Mora. He had been acting most suspiciously all the evening. That is, I was sure that he was endeavoring to discover whether he was followed or not. Perhaps he did so. At any rate he gave me the slip by entering a hotel which had several exits. I waited long enough to be sure that he was not coming out again at the door which I was watching, and then gave up the job. I started for your house, wishing to inform you of the death of Preacher Jim's mother. I had only a few blocks to go, and was near to your street, when a man hurriedly brushed by me. I only saw his face for an instant, but it was Matthew Mora."

"Matthew Mora?"

"Yes! I gazed after him, undecided whether to follow him or not. I looked around, on an impulse, reckoning how near I might be to your place, and then I observed a man leaning over another who lay on the pavement. I

went forward, and saw you bending over Slippery Sam, whom Mora undoubtedly had just killed."

"No ! No ! Mr. Barnes. I am sorry. Very sorry that your fine castles must fall. But Mora is not guilty of murdering anyone. Certainly not of killing Slippery Sam."

"How can you be so sure of that ?"

"Have I not told you. I know who killed old Mora, and I know who killed Slippery Sam. They are one and the same, but the man is not Mora."

"Did you witness the murder of Slippery Sam ?"

"No !"

"Then you cannot be certain. There must be a doubt !"

"Not a shadow of doubt !"

"Well then, who is the guilty man ?"

"Ah ! That I prefer not to tell you !"

"Do you mean that you will conceal your knowledge ? That you will protect the criminal ?"

"My knowledge is not absolute in the sense that I have been a witness, or the recipient of a confession. It is knowledge gained by analytical deduction. Under those circumstances I do not feel bound to make a charge of murder against a man."

Mr. Barnes was silent, and Preacher Jim, who had been listening attentively, now spoke.

"I would be much interested to hear you tell the steps by which you have reached this conclusion," said he,

"even though I would not ask you to divulge the name against your will."

Mr. Mitchel looked at him sharply before replying, but he did not flinch.

"Very well," said Mr. Mitchel. "I will grant your request. I will tell you how I know who killed these men. In the first place I discussed this case with the man who committed the crime; though I did not suspect him at that time. During our theorizing I repeated Mr. Barnes's argument that the murderer must have been acquainted with the internal arrangements of the house, because the weapon, a war club, had been taken from a case in the hall below. This man in replying argued that the murderer did not need to know of the collection of weapons, because Matthew Mora had taken the club to bed with him. That was a fact which could not have been known to any one except the murderer. Consequently I knew at once that the man with whom I was speaking had himself committed the crime. What say you, Preacher Jim?"

"I say that the man made a slip of the tongue, and that you were very shrewd. Now tell us how you connect that man with the killing of Slippery Sam."

"Mr. Barnes, you will recall the circumstance of your finding my match box near the body of Slippery Sam?"

"Yes. I returned it to you."

"Very well! I had loaned that to the murderer of

Matthew Mora, and he had not returned it to me. What say you to that, Preacher Jim ? ”

“ I say that you are clever in this also. One more question. Why do you hesitate to name this man ? Why do you not give him up to justice ? ”

“ Because I have given a promise to shield him if he should ever be in the predicament in which he now is.”

“ You made a promise ? To whom ? ” exclaimed Preacher Jim, excitedly.

“ That matters not. A promise is binding without regard to the identity of the person who exacted it.”

“ It was—a woman ? ”

Mr. Mitchel did not reply.

“ It was to my—my mother ? Ha ! Ha ! You are a good man, Mr. Mitchel ! You keep faith. You would not betray ; but I will tell all.”

“ Stop ! ” cried Mr. Mitchel ; but Preacher Jim, not heeding him, continued :

“ I am the guilty man. I killed Matthew Mora. I killed Slippery Sam.”

At this Mr. Barnes started from his chair, but a moment later he sat down again, exclaiming :

“ You the murderer of Matthew Mora ! Man, you are mad ! ”

Mr. Mitchel sat still, and said nothing. An expression akin to pity and regret flitted across his countenance.

“ Gentleman,” pursued Preacher Jim, “ I will tell you the whole story, for there is yet much that will surprise

you. Much that even you, Mr. Mitchel, do not suspect. But first let me ask you—tell me about my mother. You were with her while I went in search of a doctor. What happened? How came you to make her a promise to shield me? She did not know? She did not suspect? No, no! It was impossible!”

“Your mother told me the story of her life, and of yours. That is, she told me of your father, in whose history much that relates to yourself finds explanation, aye palliation. Your heritage was bad.”

“Ah! She told about the old man, did she? But what about the promise?”

“She feared that some day you would discover who your father is, and that then murder might be done. She had horrible nightmares, in which she dreamed that you had paid the supreme penalty of the law.”

“She was a prophet!”

“She argued that whatever wickedness existed in your nature you had inherited from your father, and she asked me if ever you should commit a crime, that I would exert my endeavors in your behalf. That I should reveal your bad ancestry, and urge that as a plea for leniency. This I promised to do, and this I will do.”

“It will be unnecessary!”

“Your mother intrusted to my care a number of letters and papers, in which, she said, I would find disclosed the identity of your father. Poor soul, she must have forgotten that in her anxiety to prevent you from learn-

ing the truth, she had taken precautions which left the documents practically useless. I examined them as soon as I found an opportunity, and wherever a name must have occurred, it had been cut out."

"My poor mother ! She at least loved me, whatever wrong she did in bringing me into the world. But let me tell you of my crime. At the outset I will surprise you. For years I have loved Lilian Vale."

"You loved Lilian Vale?" exclaimed Mr. Mitchel. "Extraordinary !"

"More so than you dream. Yes, I have loved her since she was a little child. I loved her then, and I loved her more as she blossomed into womanhood. But though I loved her faithfully, ardently, my passion was hopeless !"

"Why so ? Could you not win her affections in return ?"

"Perhaps ! I never sought to do so. You forget the advice which you heard me give to others in my lecture, my sermon I might call it. Do you think that I would tell other born criminals to deny themselves the pleasure of having offspring, and myself not have strength to abide by my own doctrine ? No ! I am a criminal. Congenitally a degenerate ! It was a crime to bring such as I am into the world. It would be a greater sin, for me to become a father !"

"You are a strange combination of good and evil, Preacher Jim !"

"That is true of all men. He who is considered wholly good, is merely one in whom the good greatly preponderates. The converse is also true, and the worst men have some good in their natures. That might be their salvation, were this truth recognized, and acted upon. But it is not. The whole world, save perhaps a very few who are regarded as fanatical dreamers, look upon the criminal's case as hopeless — reformation impossible. He is merely a thing to be despised, to be hounded, to be imprisoned if he steals what he cannot earn ; to be slain if at length he turn upon those who have driven him to despair. This is the crime of civilization. It is the crime of the century."

"Do you hear that, Mr. Barnes? The crime of the century. Preacher Jim defines it for you. You thought it was the killing of Matthew Mora, but I told you that it was not the crime of any one man. Now you learn what it is. It is the blind bigotry with which boasted civilization tortures the degenerate products of its own vices, making hard laws for their punishment, and measuring their acts by the standards of sound and normal manhood. That, Mr. Barnes, is the crime of the century, a crime which must be eradicated in the next century, or else within another hundred years it will have wrought ruin upon the race."

"You are right, Mr. Mitchel. My own case is a bitter example of the truth of the doctrine which you advocate. I am what you aptly called a degenerate

product of vice in another. I say this not as a plea for myself, but merely as an assertion of the truth. But let me continue. As I have said, I have always loved Lilian Vale, despite my recognition of the fact that she never could be mine. But soon a man named, or rather calling himself, Morton, came upon the scene. He was wealthy, as well as handsome. Just the sort of man to turn a young girl's head. He won her heart. At first, when I saw him making love to her, I would have strangled him but for the constant effort which I always made to overcome my homicidal tendencies. Later, when I discovered that Lilian had learned to love the man, I would not have harmed him for all the world. And so he found the opportunity to win from her all that a girl should hold most sacred. I went away for a time, hoping that absence would give me strength to bear my loss, without yielding to the criminal proclivities which merely smouldered within my bosom. When I returned, I found that Lilian had become a mother. Again it was with the greatest difficulty that I refrained from murder, but the motive for such an act was merely jealousy. It was the fear of becoming the father of a child of hers ; of seeing in the beloved darling of my wife a reproduction of my own degenerate self, which had lost me my Lilian. And now to see her fondling the offspring of another, was hard indeed to bear. But I did not then know of the degradation into which he had plunged her. I thought they were indeed wedded

as they pretended to be. If I had known the truth, I would have killed him ! ”

“ Poor fellow ! How you have suffered ! ”

“ The weeks and the months rolled by. Slippery Sam, one of my trusted friends, from time to time occupied a room in the same house in which Lilian lived. He did this at my request, to bring me reliable news of all that occurred. I had a sort of presentiment that some day she would need my aid. The time came at length. One night I was with Slippery Sam in his room, when I heard a noise below. I listened, and felt sure that some one was moving about in Lilian's room. I went back and brought out a candle. By its dim light I saw a man hurrying down stairs, carrying a bundle. I hastily followed. He walked swiftly through the dark streets, but I kept him in view. Finally he reached an old graveyard, and with difficulty climbed over the fence. Then I discovered his purpose. He had stolen Lilian's child. I saw him strip off the single garment in which it was clad, and I saw him deposit the infant in the high grass.

“ I was leaning against the wall, under the protecting shadow of a doorway next to the rail fence when he leaped back into the street, and hurried up town. I imagined that this was the husband, who thus took the first step towards abandoning poor Lilian. I was convulsed with rage, and sneaked along behind him, hesitating whether or not to strike him dead. As these

thoughts were surging in my brain, the man ahead of me stepped into the light of an electric lamp at Chatham Square, and an instant later I saw his face, and recognized it. I say recognized it, for I knew him. It was Matthew Mora, the elder."

"So, the old man had stolen the son's child, in repayment of the blow which he had received!"

"Perhaps! I knew nothing of that at the time. I was overcome by the intensity of the emotions that surged up about my heart. My brain seemed on fire! My eyes became blind, so that the old man disappeared from my view. Everything was red before me. Blood color! Blood seemed to flow about me! The streets were covered with it, and it ran about in a rapid flood. Now it rose to my knees, now it reached to my waist, to my shoulders, to my neck. I experienced a sense of strangulation. I gasped, I reeled, and then in an instant all became clear again. My senses returned, and I ran forward to seize the fiend who was a little ahead of me. He was rushing up the steps of the Elevated railroad. I ran after him, mounting three steps at a time. But I reached the platform only in time to see him enter a train, and to have the gate slammed in my face, as the guard pulled the signal-cord. Well, I was powerless for the moment. But the craving for blood was in my heart and would not be appeased. The first reckless impulse of madness, however, had passed, and now gave place to cunning. I went back to the house where Morton lived,

and I searched his closet for a suit of clothing which would serve as a disguise. I found what you all now know as the plaid suit. My object in wearing that, was to create the suspicion of Morton's guilt, for I had determined to kill old Mora, and the deed was already accomplished in my mind. He would be shown to have had provocation, by the clever detectives who would investigate the case. It would be discovered that the old man had stolen and abandoned the infant, and that would suffice as a motive. So I wore the suit and hastened to Mora's house, the location of which was well known to me. I saw the watchman, and did not consider at the time why it was that he made no protest when I deftly unlocked the door with what he probably thought was a key. Of course he imagined that I was the son. I went in, and soon found old Mora's room. He was in bed. He had the club beside him, and sat up as I entered. Instantly he began to abuse me. To taunt me with the loss of the child, which he boasted of having put out of the way. It was then, and from the words which he addressed to me in the darkness, supposing that I was his son, that I discovered his relationship to my Lilian's lover. This was a new and terrible shock to me. Again a turbid sea of blood engulfed me. The room seemed illuminated as with a glare of red fire. I saw the old man sitting there in his bed ; I saw the club at his side, and I sprung suddenly upon him and seized it. Then a desperate struggle began. He, too, caught hold of the

club. I wrestled with him and finally overpowered him. He fell to his knees, and I swung the club upward and swiftly downward. Whether I struck him once or many times, I will never know, and it is immaterial. The first blow probably ended all. As soon as he was still, I lighted the gas and ransacked his desk. I found the will, and immediately realized that it would be a powerful weapon in certain emergencies. It could be used to blackmail young Mora, in case he should escape the suspicion of this crime. This brings me to the plaid suit. I put it on over my own clothing, but after entering the house I slipped it off, lest blood should fall upon it. Before I departed, I put it on again, for I knew then why the watchman had permitted me to pass, and I hoped that he would see me again as I left."

"I see. You wished to cast suspicion upon young Mora. That is why, when we were discussing the case, you expressed the opinion that the son had committed the crime?"

"No, you are only partially correct. At the time of the murder I thought only of protecting myself. The criminal impulse controlled me, and the little good that is in me was inactive for the time. But later I had no wish to see young Mora suffer. I needed not that for my own protection. And his death would have brought suffering to Lilian."

"But you certainly expressed the opinion that Matthew Mora's son killed him?"

"I did, and it was the truth. Matthew Mora's son did kill him."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Mitchel.

"I am Matthew Mora's son," said Preacher Jim.

"You? His son?"

"Yes! I am the son of Matthew Mora and Margaret Crane. My mother always called me Matthew. You were wrong when you expressed the opinion that my mother cut out my father's name from those letters. I found the letters one day, and so learned the truth. Later on I cut the names out in order that the secret might not be discovered by any one else."

"This is indeed a surprising revelation. You Matthew Mora's son! It is like a tale of fiction; and how very just is its ending. The man was murdered by the very child which he had abandoned, after bequeathing to him a heritage of crime."

"Yes, in the eyes of the law I am a murderer, who should be hanged. Perhaps in the eyes of the Almighty Father I am an instrument of Justice. Now that I have told you all, you will more readily comprehend the craving for blood which seized me when in this monster, who had thus cruelly treated an infant, I recognized my own father. You will understand better how the second paroxysm attacked me in his room, when I learned that the man who had stolen my Lilian's heart was my own brother, and that thus in spite of my self-sacrifice the offspring of my beloved would have a heritage of crime

which traced back to my own progenitor. You will comprehend with what fiendish joy I sprang upon the man who was at once the author of my being, and of all my suffering and wrongs. You will see why I took the will which deprived my brother of one half of his fortune. That is the story of the killing of Matthew Mora. Was it a murder? I will not ask for the verdict of my fellow men, but will abide by the decision of my Maker."

"There is still one point which I would like to have explained," said Mr. Barnes. "Mora's valet positively asserts that he saw his master in the house that night, and that he helped him to dress in the plaid suit. How do you account for that?"

"Very easily," said Preacher Jim. "The valet only tells this story at my request. After the death of Slippery Sam I fully decided upon my own course. Upon one thing, however, I was determined. This man Mora, my own half-brother, should right the wrong which he had done to Lilian. I knew of his visits to the rich girl up town, and feared that it might be difficult to coerce him. The valet is a member of our organization, and therefore it was easy for me to gain his co-operation, and he readily consented to tell you the story which convinced you, Mr. Barnes, that Mora was guilty. Thus I hoped to have you arrest him, and when once more in custody I would have been able to bring him to terms by offering him his liberty, which he could only have obtained through my confession."

"What will you do now?" asked Mr. Barnes.

"Ah, that is simple! Thanks to Mr. Mitchel, my Lillian is now a lawful wife, with her babe restored to her. You see, I know all at last. My inhuman father is dead. My poor mother lies in her grave. Why should I live longer? Mr. Barnes, I deliver myself to you as your prisoner."

"No, no, Mr. Barnes," cried Mr. Mitchel. "Do not touch him. This man shall go forth from my house, as he entered it, a free man."

"You are wrong, Mr. Mitchel, though I thank you most sincerely. I must surrender to the law. Why not let Mr. Barnes have the glory of seeming to have unravelled the mystery, and claim Mora's proffered reward?"

"I should not make such a claim," retorted the detective.

"No, I think you are a more honest man!" said Preacher Jim. "But if you hand me over to the authorities you will receive credit, and thus I shall do some good in the world. Besides, you have sufficiently earned Mora's money, and ought to have it."

"But why should you give yourself up at all?" argued Mr. Mitchel. "You have suffered so much that it would be an injustice for you to suffer more."

"It is inevitable, and it is best. You forget that I have committed a second murder. I killed Slippery Sam. That, too, was in a moment of uncontrollable

emotion. I had just witnessed the death of my mother ; I went forth into the street and ran along aimlessly. By chance I approached your doorway, and I saw Slippery Sam leave your house. Instantly I jumped to the conclusion that he had betrayed me, for he knew the truth. He knew when I took the plaid suit, and when I returned it. In fact he knew everything. In the disordered state of my mind it was impossible for me to reason calmly. I seized Sam by the throat. He had a knife in his hand. I wrenched it from him, and killed him. As he fell, the cunning of the beast—no ! the cunning of the man who is worse than a beast—came to me. I knew that you would know of this murder committed so near your house ; I recalled the arguments and theories that we had exchanged, and I slipped the will into the poor dying boy's pocket that you might find it there and be mystified."

"It did puzzle me for a time," admitted Mr. Mitchel.

"And so you see," said Preacher Jim, almost wearily, "the end must come now. I cannot permit myself to live longer. My father was a Sadist. The love of cruelty which made him strangle a poor, defenceless monkey ; which caused him once to tie a boy up by his thumbs in a garret and leave him there until he fainted ; which prompted him to pinch, and kick, and otherwise torture children and animals, has been transmitted to me, his first born, his abandoned son, in a more virulent form. Twice I have yielded to the craving for

blood. Twice I have taken human life. I am a fiend in human guise ; a beast ; a monster ! Nothing is left for me on earth. No human love can be mine ! For me there is no charity ! No reformation ! No salvation ! I am a menace to my kind ! There is nothing for me but extermination. I must be condemned to die. All I ask is, that at the supreme moment when I am sentenced, I may be allowed to speak. To tell my story, that it may appeal to civilization, to humanity, in behalf of those utterly forlorn creatures, the congenital criminals. That will be my last sermon. And may God have mercy on my soul !”

THE END.

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